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E MAN WHO FOUND HIMSELF

By H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

THE BEACH OF DREAMS
THE GHOST GIRL
THE MAN WHO LOST HIMSELF
THE GOLD TRAIL
SEA PLUNDER
THE PEARL FISHERS
THE PRESENTATION
THE NEW OPTIMISM
POPPYLAND
THE POEMS OF FRANÇOIS VILLON
Translated by
H. De Vere Stacpoole

The Man Who Found Himself

(Uncle Simon)

By

MARGARET

AND

H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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PART I

THE MAN WHO FOUND HIMSELF

CHAPTER I

SIMON

KING CHARLES STREET lies in Westminster; you turn a corner and find yourself in Charles Street as one might turn a corner and find oneself in History. The cheap, the nasty, and the new vanish, and fine old comfortable houses of red brick, darkened by weather and fog, take you into their keeping, tell you that Queen Anne is not dead, amuse you with pictures of Sedan chairs and running footmen and discharge you at the other end into the twentieth century from whence you came.

Simon Pettigrew lived at No. 12, where his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather had lived before him—lawyers all of them. So respected, so rooted in the soil of the Courts as to be less a family of lawyers than a minor English Institution. Divorce your mind

entirely from all petty matters of litigation in connection with the Pettigrews, Simon or any of his forebears would have appeared just as readily in their shirt-sleeves in Fleet Street as in County or Police Court for or against the defendant; they were old family lawyers and they had a fair proportion of the old English families in their keeping—deed-boxes stuffed with papers, secrets to make one's hair curl.

To the general public this great and potent firm was almost unknown, yet Pettigrew and Pettigrew had cut off enough heirs to furnish material for a dozen Braddon novels, had smothered numerous screaming tragedies in high life and buried them at dead of night, and all without a wrinkle on the brow of the placid old firm that drove its curricle through the reigns of the Georges, took snuff in the days of Palmerston, and in the days of Edward Rex still refused to employ the typewriter.

Simon, the last of the firm, unmarried and without near relation, was at the time of this story turned sixty—a clean-shaven, bright-eyed, old-fashioned type of man, sedate, famed for his cellar, and a member of the Athenæum. A man you never, never would have imagined to possess such a thing as a Past. Never would

have imagined to have been filled with that semi-diabolical, semi-angelical joy of life which leads to the follies of youth.

All the same, Simon, between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-two, had raked the town vigorously more than viciously, haunted Evans' supper-rooms, fallen madly in love with an actress, enjoyed life as only the young can enjoy life in the gorgeous, dazzling, deceitful country of Youth.

Driving in hansom cabs was then a pleasure! New clothes and outrageous shirts and ties a delight, actresses goddesses. Then, one day his actress turned out an actress, and the following night he came out of the Cocoa Tree owing a gambling debt of a thousand pounds that he could not pay. His father paid on his promising to turn over a new leaf, which he did. But his youth was checked, his brightness eclipsed, and arm-in-arm with common sense he set out on the long journey that led him at last to the high position of a joyless, loveless, desolate, wealthy solicitor of sixty—respected, very much respected. In fact, less a man than a firm. Yet there still remained to him as a legacy of his youth, a very pretty wit of his own, an irresponsible turn of talk when he gave himself away—as at dinner-parties.

CHAPTER II

MUDD

MUDD was Simon's factotum, butler, and minister of inferior affairs. Mudd was sixty-five and a bit; he had been in the services of the Pettigrew family forty-five years, and had grown up, so to say, side by side with Simon. For the last twenty years every morning Mudd had brought up his master's tea, drawn up his blinds and set out his clothes—seven thousand times or thereabouts, allowing for holidays and illnesses. He was a clean-shaven old man, with rounded shoulders and a way that had become blunt with long use; he only "sirred" Simon in the presence of guests and servants, and had an open way of speaking on matters of everyday affairs verging on the conjugal in its occasional frankness.

This morning, the third of June, Mudd, having drawn up his master's blinds and set out his boots and shaving things, vanished and returned with his clothes, brushed and folded, and a jug

of shaving water which he placed on the wash-handstand.

"The arms will be out of this old coat if you go on wearing it much longer," grumbled Mudd, as he placed the things on a chair. "It's been in wear nearly a year and a half; you're heavy on the left elbow—it's the desk does it."

"I'll see," said Simon.

He knew quite well the suggestion that lay in the tone and the words of Mudd, but a visit to his tailors was almost on a par with a visit to his dentists, and new clothes were an abhorrence. It took him a fortnight to get used to a new coat, and as to being shabby, why, a decent shabbiness was part of his personality and, vaguely perhaps, of his pride in life. He could afford to be shabby.

Mudd having vanished, Simon rose and began his toilet, tubbing in a tin bath—a flat Victorian tin bath—and shaving with a razor taken from a case of seven, each marked with a day of the week.

This razor was marked "Tuesday."

Having carefully dried "Tuesday" and put it back between "Monday" and "Wednesday," Simon closed the case with the care and precision that marked all his actions, finished

dressing, and looked out of the window to see what sort of day it was.

A peep of glorious blue sky caught across the roofs of the opposite houses informed him, leaving him unenthusiastic, and then, having wound up his watch, he came downstairs to the Jacobean dining-room, where tea, toast, frizzled bacon, and a well-aired *Times* were awaiting him.

At a quarter to ten precisely Mudd opened the hall door, verified the fact that the brougham was in waiting and informed his master, helped him into his overcoat—a light summer overcoat —and closed the carriage door on him.

A little after ten Simon reached Old Serjeants' Inn and entered his office.

Brownlow, the chief clerk, had just arrived, and Simon, nodding to him, passed into his private room, where his letters were laid out, hung up his hat and coat, and set to business.

It was a sight to watch his face as he read letter after letter, laying each in order under a marble paper-weight. One might have fancied oneself watching Law at work, in seclusion and unadorned with robes. He did not need glasses —his eyes were still the eyes of a young man.

Having finished his letters, he rang for his stenographer and began dictating replies, send-

ing out now and again for Brownlow to consult upon details; then, this business finished and alone again, he sat resting for a moment, leaning back in his chair and trimming his nails with the little penknife that lay on the table. It was his custom at twelve o'clock precisely to have a glass of old brown sherry. It was a custom of the firm; Andrew Pettigrew had done the same in his day and had handed on the habit to his son. If a favoured client were present the client would be asked to have a glass, and the bottle and two glasses were kept in the John Tann safe in the corner of the room. Ye gods! Fancy in your modern solicitor's office a wine-bottle in the principal safe and the solicitor asking a client to "have a drink"! Yet the green-seal sherry, famous amidst the *cognoscenti,* and the safe and the atmosphere of the room and the other-day figure of Simon, all were in keeping, part of a unique and Georgian whole, like the component parts of a Toby jug.

The old silver-faced clock on the mantel, having placed its finger on midday, set up its silvery lisp, and Simon, rousing himself from his reverie, rose, drew a bunch of keys from his pocket and opened the safe.

Then he stood looking at what was to be seen inside.

The safe contained two deed-boxes, one on top of the other, on the iron fire-and-burglar-proof floor, and by the deed-boxes stood the sherry bottle and the cut-glass satellite wine-glasses, whilst upon the topmost deed-box reposed a black leather wallet.

Simon's eyes were fixed on the wallet, the thing seemed to hold him spellbound; one might have fancied him gazing into the devilish-diamond eyes of a coiled snake. The wallet had not been there when he closed the safe last; there had been nothing in the safe but the boxes, the bottle and the glasses, and of the safe there were but two keys, one at the bank, one in his pocket. The manager of Cumber's Bank, a bald-headed magnate with side-whiskers, even if he had means of access to the safe, could not have been the author of this little trick, simply because the key at the bank was out of his reach, being safely locked away in the Pettigrew private deed-chest, and the key of the Pettigrew private deed-chest was on the same bunch as that now hanging from the safe door.

The lock was unpickable.

Yet the look on Simon's face was less that of surprise at the thing found than terror of the thing seen. Brownlow's head on a charger could not have affected him much more.

Then, stretching out his hand, he took the wallet, brought it to the table and opened it.

It contained bank-notes, beautiful, new, crisp Bank of England notes; but the joy of the ordinary man in discovering a great unexpected wad of bank-notes was not apparent in the face of Simon, unless beads of perspiration are indications of joy. He turned to the sherry-bottle, filled two glasses with a shaky hand and drained them, then he turned again to the notes.

He sat down and, pushing the wallet aside, began to count them. Began to count them feverishly, as though the result of the tally were a matter of vast importance. There were four notes of a thousand, the rest were hundreds and a few tens. Ten thousand pounds, that was the total.

He put the notes back in the case, buckled it, jumped up like a released spring, flung the wallet on top of the deed-box and closed the safe with a snap.

Then he stood, hands in pockets, examining the pattern of the Turkey carpet.

At this moment a knock came to the door and a junior clerk appeared.

"What the devil do you want?" asked Simon.

The clerk stated his case. A Mr. Smith had called, craving an interview.

"Ask Mr. Brownlow to see him," replied Simon; "but ask Mr. Brownlow to step in here first."

In a moment Brownlow appeared.

"Brownlow," said Simon, "look up Dr. Oppenshaw's telephone number and ask him can he give me ten minutes' interview before luncheon. Say it is most urgently important. 110A, Harley Street, is his address—and, see here, have a taxicab called—that's all."

Whilst Brownlow was away on his mission Simon put on his overcoat, put on his hat, blew his nose lustily in the red bandanna handkerchief that was part of his personality, opened the safe and took another peep at the wallet, as if to make sure that the fairy hand that had placed it there had not spirited it away again, and was in the act of locking the safe when the senior clerk entered to say that Dr. Oppenshaw would be visible at a quarter to one, and that Morgan, the office-boy, had procured the cab.

Brownlow, though he managed to conceal his feelings, was disturbed by the manner of his chief and by the telephone message to the doctor; by the whole affair, in fact, for Simon never left the office till the stroke of one, when

the brougham called to take him to Simpson's in the Strand for luncheon.

Was Simon ill? He ventured to put the question and nearly had his head snapped off.

Ill! No, of course he wasn't ill, never better in his life; what on earth put that idea into Brownlow's head?

Then the testy one departed in search of the taxi, and Brownlow returned to his room and his duties.

CHAPTER III

DR. OPPENSHAW

JUST as rabbit-burrows on the Arizona plain give shelter to a mixed tenantry, a rabbit, an owl, and a snake often occupying the same hole, so the Harley Street houses are, as a rule, divided up between dentists, oculists, surgeons, and physicians, so that under the same roof you can, if you are so minded, have your teeth extracted, your lungs percussed, your eyes put right, and your surgical ailment seen to, each on a different floor. Number 110A, Harley Street, however, contained only one occupant —Dr. Otto Oppenshaw. Dr. Oppenshaw had no need of a sharer in his rent burdens; a neurologist in the most nerve-ridden city of Europe, he was making an income of some twenty-five thousand a year.

People were turned away from his door as from a theatre where a wildly successful play is running. The main craving of fashionable neurotics, a craving beyond, though often inspired by the craving for, the opium alkaloids

and cocaine, was to see Oppenshaw. Yet he was not much to see: a little bald man like a turnip, with the manners of a butcher, and gold-rimmed spectacles.

Dukes inspired with the desire to see Oppenshaw had to wait their turn often behind tradesmen, yet he was at Simon Pettigrew's command. Simon was his sometime lawyer. It was half-past twelve, or maybe a bit more, when the taxi drew up at 110A and the lawyer, after a sharp legal discussion over tuppence with the driver, mounted the steps and pressed the bell.

The door was at once opened by a pale-faced man in black, who conducted the visitor to the waiting-room, where a single patient was seated reading a last year's volume of *Punch* and not seeming to realise the jokes.

This person was called out presently, and then came Simon's turn.

Oppenshaw got up from his desk and came forward to meet him.

"I'm sorry to bother you," said Simon, when they had exchanged greetings. "It's a difficult matter I have come to consult you about, and an important one, else I would not have cut into your time like this."

"State your case," said the other jovially, retaking his seat and pointing out a chair.

"That's the devil of it," replied Simon; "it's a case that lies out of the jurisdiction of common sense and common knowledge. Look at me. Do I look as though I were a dreamer or creature of fancies?"

"You certainly don't," said Oppenshaw frankly.

"Yet what I have to tell you disgusts me—will disgust you."

"I'm used to that, I'm used to that," said the other. "Nothing you can say will alarm, disgust, or leave me incredulous."

"Well, here it is," said the patient, plunging into the matter as a man into cold water. "A year ago—a year and four weeks, for it was on the third of May—I went down to my office one morning and transacted my business as usual. At twelve o'clock I—er—had occasion to open my safe, a safe of which I alone possess the key. On the top of a deed-box in that safe I found a brown-paper parcel tied with red tape. I was astonished, for I had put no parcel in."

"You might have forgotten," said Oppenshaw.

"I never forget," replied Simon.

"Go on," said Oppenshaw.

"I opened the parcel. It contained bank-

notes to the amount of ten thousand pounds."

"H'm—h'm."

"Ten thousand pounds. I could not believe my eyes. I sent for my chief clerk, Brownlow. He could not believe his eyes, and I fear he even doubted the statement of the whole case. Now listen. I determined to go to my bank, Cumber's, and make enquiries as to my balance, ridden by the seemingly absurd idea that I myself had drawn this amount and forgotten the fact. I may say at once this was the truth, I *had* drawn it, unknown to myself. Well, that was the third of May, and when and where do you think I found myself next?"

"Go on," said Oppenshaw.

"In Paris on the third of June."

"Ah—ah."

"Everything between those dates was a blank."

"Your case is not absolutely common," said Oppenshaw. "Rare, but not without precedent —read the papers. Why, only yesterday a woman was found on a seat at Brighton. She had left London a week ago; the interval was to her a complete blank, yet she had travelled about and lived like an ordinary mortal in possession of her ordinary senses."

"Wait a bit," said Simon. "I was not found on a seat in Paris. I found myself in a gorgeously-furnished sitting-room of the Bristol Hotel, and I was dressed in clothes that might have suited a young man—a fool of twenty, and I very soon found that I had been acting—acting like a fool. Of the ten thousand only five thousand remained."

"Five thousand in a month," said Oppenshaw. "Well, you paid the price of your temporary youth. Tell me," said he, "and be quite frank. What were you like when you were young? I mean in mind and conduct?"

Simon moved wearily.

"I was a fool for a while," said he. "Then I suddenly checked myself and became sensible."

Oppenshaw rapped twice with his fingers on his desk as if in triumph over his own perception.

"That clears matters," said he. "You were undoubtedly suffering from Lethmann's disease."

"Good Lord!" said Simon. "What's that?"

"It's a form of aberration—most interesting. You have heard of double personalities, of which a great deal of nonsense has been written? Well, Lethmann's disease is just this: a man, say, of twenty, suddenly checked in the course

of his youth, becomes practically another person. You, for instance, became, or fancied you became, another person; you suddenly 'checked yourself and became sensible,' as you put it, but you did not destroy that old foolish self. Nothing is destructible in mind as long as the brain-tissue is normal; you put it in prison, and after the lapse of many years, owing, perhaps, to some slight declension in brain power, it broke out, dominated you, and lived again. Youth must be served.

"It would have been perhaps better for you to have let your youth run its course and expend itself normally. You have paid the price of your own will-power. I am very much interested in this. Tell me as faithfully as you can what you did in Paris, or at least what you gathered that you did. When you came to, did you remember your actions during the month of aberration?"

"When I came to," said Simon, speaking almost with his teeth set, "I was like a person stunned. Then I remembered, bit by bit, what I had been doing, but it was like vaguely remembering what another man had been doing."

"Right," said Oppenshaw, "that tallies with your case. Go on."

"I had been doing foolish things. I had been

living, so to say, on the surface of life, without a thought of anything but pleasure, without the slightest recollection of myself as I am. I had been doing things that I might have done at twenty—extravagant follies; yet I believe not any really vicious acts. I had been drinking too much champagne, for one thing, and there were several ladies. . . . Good Lord! Oppenshaw, I'd blush to confess it to anyone else, but I'd been going on like a boy, picking flowers at Fontainebleau—writing verses to one of these hussies. I could remember that. Me!—verses about blue skies and streams and things! Me! It's horrible!"

"Used you to write verses when you were young?"

"Yes," said Simon, "I believe I used to make that sort of fool of myself."

"You were full of the joy of living?"

"I suppose so."

"You see, everything tallies. Yes, without any manner of doubt it's a case of Lethmann's disease rounded and complete. Now, tell me, when you came to, you could remember all your actions in Paris; how far back did that memory go?"

"I could remember dimly right back to when I was leaving the office in Old Serjeants' Inn

with the bundle of bank-notes to go to the bank. Then all of a sudden it would seem I forgot all about my past and became, as you insist, myself at twenty. I went to the Charing Cross Hotel, where I had already, it would seem, hired rooms for myself, and where I had directed new clothes to be sent, and then I went to Paris."

"This is most important," said Oppenshaw. "You had already hired rooms for yourself and ordered clothes. Those acts must have been committed before the great change came on you, and of course without your knowledge."

"They must. Also the act of drawing the ten thousand from the bank."

"The concealed other self must have been working like a mole in the dark for some days at least," said Oppenshaw, "utterly without your knowledge."

"Utterly."

"Then having prepared in a vague sort of way a means for enjoying itself, it burst out; it was like a butterfly coming out of a chrysalis—excuse the simile."

"Something like that."

"So far so good. Well, now, when you came to your old self in Paris, what did you do?"

"I came back to London, of course."

"But surely your sudden disappearance must

have caused alarm? Why, it would have been in the papers."

"Not a bit," said Simon grimly. "My other self, as you call it, had prepared for that. It seems the night before the thing happened I told Mudd—you know Mudd, the butler—that I might be called away suddenly and be absent a considerable time, that I would buy clothes and nightshirts and things, if that was so, at the place I was going to, and that he was to tell the office if I went away, and to tell Brownlow to carry on. Infernal, isn't it?"

"Infernally ingenious," said Oppenshaw; "but if you had ever studied the subject of duplex personality you would not be surprised. I have seen a young religious girl make most complex preparations for a journey as a missionary to China, utterly without her own knowledge. We caught her at the station, fortunately, just in time—but how did you find out that you gave Mudd those instructions?"

"The whole way back from Paris," said Simon, "I was preparing to meet all sorts of enquiry and bother as to my absence. Then, when I reached home, Mudd did not seem to think it out of the way; he told me he had followed my directions and notified the office when I did not return, and told them that I might be

some time away. Then I got out of him what I had said about the clothes and so on."

"Tell me," said Oppenshaw suddenly, "why did you come to me to-day to tell me all this?"

"Because," said Simon, "on opening my safe this morning I found in a wallet on the top of the deed-box another bundle of notes for exactly the same amount."

CHAPTER IV

DR. OPPENSHAW—*continued*

OPPENSHAW whistled.

"A bundle of notes amounting to ten thousand pounds," said Simon; "exactly the same amount."

Oppenshaw looked at his nails carefully without speaking. Simon watched him.

"Tell me," said Simon, "is this confounded disease, or whatever it is, recurrent?"

"You mean is there any fear that your old self—or, rather, your young self—is preparing for another outbreak?"

"Precisely."

"That this drawing of another ten thousand, unknown to yourself, is only the first act in a similar drama, or shall we say comedy?"

"Yes."

"Well, I can't say for certain, for the disease, or the ailment, if you like the term better, has not been long enough before the eyes of science to make quite definite statements. But, as far as I can judge, I'm afraid it is."

Simon swallowed.

"Leaving aside the fact of the similarity of the action and the amount of money drawn, we have the similarity in time. It is true that last year it was in May you started the business."

"The third of May, a month's difference," said Simon.

"True, but it is less a question of a month more or less than of season. Last early May and April end were abnormally fine. I remember that, for I had to go to Switzerland. This May has been wretched. Then during the last week we have had this burst of splendid weather —weather that makes me feel young again."

"It doesn't me," said Simon.

"No, but it has evidently—at least probably —had that effect on your other 'me.' The something that urges the return of the swallow has acted in your subconsciousness with the coming of springlike weather just as last year."

"Damn swallows!" cried Simon, rising up and pacing the floor. "Suppose this thing lets me in for another five thousand, and Lord knows what else? Oppenshaw," wheeling suddenly, "is nothing to be done? How can I stop it?"

"Well," said Oppenshaw, "quite frankly, I think that the best means is the exercise of your

own will-power. You might, of course, take the notes back to the bank and instruct them not to allow you to draw any more money for, say, a month—but that would be unpleasant."

"Impossible!"

"You might, again, put yourself under restraint. I could do that for you."

"Put myself in a mad-house?"

"No, no—a nursing home."

"Never!"

"You might, again, instruct your butler to follow you and, as a matter of fact, keep his eye on you for the next month."

"Mudd!"

"Yes."

"Sooner die. Never could look him in the face again."

"Have you any near and trustworthy relatives?"

"Only a nephew, utterly wild and untrustworthy; a chap I've cut out of my will and had to stop his allowance."

"And you are not married—that's a pity. A wife——"

"Hang wives!" cried Simon. "What's the good of talking of the impracticable?"

"Well, there we are," continued Oppenshaw, perfectly unruffled. "I have suggested every-

thing; there is only will left. The greatest friend of a man is his will. Determine in your own mind that this change will *not* take place. I believe that will be your safest plan. The others I have suggested are all impossible to your sense of *amour propre,* and, besides that, there is the grave objection that they savour of force. It might have bad consequences to use force to what would be practically the subconscious mind. Your will is quite different. Will can never unbalance mind. In fact, as a famous English neurologist has put it, ' Most cases of mental disturbances are due to an inflated ego—a deflated will.' "

" Oh, my will's all right," said Simon.

" Well, then, use it and don't trouble. Say to yourself definitely—' This shall not be.' "

" And that money in the safe? "

" Leave it there; dare your other self to take it. To remove it and place it in other keeping would be a weakness."

" Thanks," said Simon. " I grasp what you mean." He took out his purse and laid five guineas on the desk. Oppenshaw did not seem to see the money. He accompanied his patient to the door. It was half-past one.

CHAPTER V

I WILL NOT BE HIM

OUT in Harley Street Simon walked hurriedly and without goal. It was getting past luncheon-time; he had forgotten the fact.

Oppenshaw was one of those men who carry conviction. You will have noticed in life that quite a lot of people don't convince; they may be good, they may be earnest, but they don't convince. Selling a full-grown dog in the world's market, they have little chance against a convincing competitor selling a pup.

Oppenshaw's twenty-five thousand a year came, in good part, from this quality. He had convinced Simon of the fact that inside Simon lay Youth that was once Simon—Youth that, though unseen and unknown to the world, could still dominate its container even to the extent of meddling with his bank balance.

That for Simon was at this moment the main fact in the situation. It was sufficiently bad

that this old imperious youth should be able to make him act foolishly, but that was nothing to the fact that it was able to tamper with his money.

Simon's money was the solid ground under his feet, and he recognised, now, that it was everything to him—everything. He could have sacrificed at a pinch all else; he could have sacrificed Mudd, his furniture, his old prints, his cellar, but his money was even more than the ground under his feet—it was himself.

Suppose this disease were to recur often and at shorter intervals, or become chronic?

He calculated furiously that at the rate of five thousand a month his fortune would last, roughly, a year and a half. He saw his securities being sold, his property in Hertfordshire, his furniture, his pictures.

He had a remedy, it is true: to put himself under restraint. A nice sort of remedy!

In Weymouth Street, the home of nursing homes and doctors, into which he had wandered, his mind tension became so acute that the impulse came on him to hurry back to Oppenshaw in the vague hope that something else might be done—some operation, for instance. He knew little of medicine and less of surgery, but he had heard of people being operated on

for brain mischief, and he remembered, now, having read of an old admiral who had lost consciousness owing to an injury at the battle of the Nile, and had remained unconscious till an operation cured him some months later.

He was saved from bothering Oppenshaw again by an instinctive feeling that it would be useless. You cannot extract the follies of youth by an operation. He went on trending towards Oxford Street, but still without object.

What made his position worse was his instinct as a solicitor. For forty years he had, amongst other work, been engaged in tying up Youth so that it could not get at Property, extracting Youth from pitfalls it had tumbled into whilst carrying Property in its arms. The very words "youth" and "property," innocent in themselves, were obnoxious to Simon when combined. He had always held that no young man ought to inherit till he was twenty-five, and, heaven knows, that opinion had a firm basis in experience. He had always in law looked askance on youth and its doings. In practice he had been tolerant enough, though, indeed, youth comes little in the way of a hard-working and prominent elderly solicitor, but in law, and he was mostly law, he had little tolerance, no respect.

And here was youth with *his* property in its

arms, or what was, perhaps, even worse, the imminent dread of that unholy alliance.

In Oxford Street he stopped at a shop window and inspected ladies' blouses—that was his condition of mind; jewellers' windows held him, not by the excellence of their goods, but by the necessity to turn his back to the crowd and think—think—think.

His mind was in a turmoil, and he could no more control his thoughts than he could have controlled the traffic; the wares of the merchants exposed to view seemed to do the thinking. Gold alberts only held his eye to explain that his lands in Hertfordshire flung on the market in the present state of agriculture would not fetch a tithe of their worth, but that his green-seal sherry and all the treasures of his cellar would bring half the West End to their sale—Old Pettigrew's cellar.

Other things in other shops spoke to him in a like manner, and then he found himself at Oxford Circus with the sudden consciousness that *this* was not fighting Lethmann's disease by the exercise of will. His will had, in fact, been in abeyance, his imagination master of him.

But a refuge in the middle of Oxford Circus was not exactly the place for the re-equipment of will-power; the effort nearly cost him his life

from a motor-lorry as he crossed. Then, when he had reached the other side and could resume work free of danger, he found that he had apparently no will to re-equip.

He found himself repeating over and over the words, "I will not be him—I will not be him." That seemed all right for a moment, and he would have satisfied himself that his will-power was working splendidly, had not a sudden cold doubt sprung up in his heart as to whether the proper formula ought not to be, "He will not be me.'

Ah! that was the crux of the business. It was quite easy to determine, "I will not be him," but when it came to the declaration, "He will not be me," Simon found that he had no will-power in the matter. It was quite easy to determine that he would not do foolish things, impossible to determine that another should not do them.

Then it came to his mind like a flash that the other one was not a personality so much as a combination of foolish actions, old desires, and alien motives let loose on the world without governance.

He turned mechanically into Verreys' and had a chop. At Simpson's in the Strand he always had a chop or a cut from the saddle, or a cut

from the sirloin—like the razors, the daily menus following one another in rotation. This was a chop day, just as it was a " Tuesday " day, and habit prevented him from forgetting the fact. The chop and a half-bottle of St. Estéphe made him feel a stronger man. He suddenly became cheerful and valiant.

" If worst comes to worst," said he to himself, " I *can put* myself under restraint; nobody need know. Yes, begad! I have always that. I can put myself under surveillance. Why, dash it! I can tie up my money so that I can't touch it; it's quite easy."

The chop and St. Estéphe, hauling him out of the slough of despond, told him this. It was a sure way of escape from losing his money. He had furiously rejected the idea at Oppenshaw's, but at Oppenshaw's his Property had not had time to talk fully to him, but in that awful journey from Harley Street to Verreys' he had walked arm-in-arm with his Property chattering on one side and dumb Bankruptcy on the other.

Restraint would have been almost as odious as bankruptcy to him, yet now, as a sure means of escape from the other, it seemed almost a pleasant prospect.

He left Verreys' and walked along feeling brighter and better. He turned into the

Athenæum. It was turning-in time at the Athenæum, and the big armchairs were full of somnolent ones, bald heads drooping, whiskers hidden by the sheets of the *Times*. Here he met Sir Ralph Puttick, Hon. Physician to His Majesty, stiff, urbane, stately, seeming ever supported on either side by a lion and a unicorn.

Sir Ralph and Simon were known one to the other and had much in common, including anti-socialism.

In armchairs, they talked of Lloyd George—at least, Sir Ralph did, Simon had other considerations on his mind. Leaning forward in his chair, he suddenly asked, apropos of nothing:

"Did you ever hear of a disease called Lethmann's disease?"

Now Sir Ralph was Chest and Heart, nothing else. He was also nettled at "shop" being suddenly thrust upon him by a damned attorney, for Simon was "Simon Pettigrew, quite a character, one of our old-fashioned, first-class English lawyers," when Sir Ralph was in a good temper and happened to consider Simon; nettled, Simon was a "damned attorney."

"Never," said Sir Ralph. "What disease did you say?"

"Lethmann's. It's a new disease, it seems."

Another horrid blunder, as though the lion

and unicorn man were only acquainted with old diseases—out of date, in fact.

"Never," replied the other. "There's no such thing. Who told you about it?"

"I read about it," said Simon. He tried to give a picture of the symptoms and failed to convince, but he managed to irritate. The semi-royal one listened with a specious appearance of attention and even interest; then, the other having finished, he opened his batteries.

Simon left the Club with the feeling that he had been put upon the stand beside charlatans, quacks, and the purveyor of crank theories; also that he had been snubbed.

CHAPTER VI

TIDD AND RENSHAW

DID he mind? Not a bit; he enjoyed it. If Sir Ralph had kicked him out of the Athenæum for airing false science there he would have enjoyed it. He would have enjoyed anything casting odium and discredit on the theory of double personality in the form of Lethmann's disease.

For now his hunted soul, that had taken momentary refuge in the thought of nursing homes and restraint, had left that burrow and was taking refuge in doubt.

The whole thing was surely absurd. The affair of last year *must* have been a temporary aberration due to overwork, despite the fact that he had, indeed, drawn another ten thousand unconsciously from the bank; it was patently foolish to think that a man could be under the dominion of a story-book disease. He had read Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—that wild fiction! Why, if this thing were true, it would be a fiction just as wild. Oceans of comfort suddenly came

to him. It gave him a new grip on the situation, pointing out that the whole of this business as suggested by Oppenshaw was on a level with a " silly sensational story," that is to say with the impossible—therefore impossible.

He made one grave mistake—the mistake of reckoning Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde as a " silly sensational story."

Anyhow, he got comfort from what he considered fact, and at dinner that night he was so restored that he was able to grumble because the mutton " was done to rags."

He dined alone.

As he had not returned to the office in the afternoon, Brownlow had sent some papers relative to a law case then pending for his consideration. It often happened that Simon took business home with him, or, if he were not able to attend at the office, important papers would be sent to his house.

To-night, according to custom, he retired to his library, drank his coffee, spread open the documents, and, comfortably seated in a huge leathern armchair, plunged into work.

It was a difficult case, the case of Tidd *v.* Renshaw, complicated by all sorts of cross-issues and currents. In its dry legal jargon it involved the title to London house property, the credit

of a woman, the happiness of a family, and a few other things, all absolutely of no account to Simon, engaged on the law of the case, and to whom the human beings involved were simply as the chessmen in the hands of the player; and necessarily, for a lawyer who allowed human considerations to colour his view would be an untrustworthy lawyer.

At ten o'clock Simon, suddenly laying the documents on the floor beside him, rose up, rang the bell, and stood on the hearthrug with his hands linked behind him.

Mudd appeared.

"Mudd," said Simon, "I may be called away to-morrow and be absent some time. If I am not at the office when the brougham comes to fetch me for luncheon, you can notify the office that I have been called away. You needn't bother about packing things for me; I will buy anything I want where I am going."

"I could easily pack a bag for you," said Mudd, "and you could take it with you to the office."

"I want no bag. I have given you your directions," said Simon, and Mudd went off grumbling and snubbed.

Then the lawyer sat down and plunged into law again, folding up the documents at eleven

o'clock and putting them carefully in his bureau. Then he switched off the electric light, examined the hall door to see that it was properly bolted, and went up to bed carrying the case of Tidd *v.* Renshaw with him as a nightcap.

It hung about his intellect like a penumbra as he undressed, warding off, or partly warding off, thoughts about Oppenshaw and his own condition that were trying to get into his mind.

Then he popped into bed, and, still pursuing Tidd *v.* Renshaw through the labyrinths of the law, and holding tight on to their tails, fell asleep.

CHAPTER VII

THE WALLET

HE awoke to Mudd drawing the blinds and to another perfect day—a summer morning, luxurious and warm, beautiful even in London. He had lost clutch of Tidd and Renshaw in the land of sleep, but he had found his strength and self-confidence again.

The terror of Lethmann's disease had vanished; the thing was absurd, he had been frightened by a bogey. Oppenshaw was a clever man, but he was a specialist, always thinking of nerve diseases, living in an atmosphere of them. Sir Ralph Puttick, on the contrary, was a man of solid understanding and wider views—a sane man.

So he told himself as he took "Wednesday" from its case and shaved himself. Then he came down to the same frizzled bacon and the same aired *Times,* put on the same overcoat and hat, and got into the same old brougham and started for the office.

He went into his room, where his usual

morning letters were laid out for him. But he did not take off his coat and hat. He had come to a determination. Oppenshaw had told him to leave the wallet where it was and not take the notes back to the bank, as that would be a weakness. Sir Ralph Puttick was telling him now that Oppenshaw was a fool. The real weakness would be to follow the advice of Oppenshaw. To follow that advice would be to play with this business and confess that there was reality in it; besides, with those notes in the safe behind him he could never do his morning's work.

No; back those notes should go to the bank. He opened the safe, and there was the wallet seated like an evil genius on the deed-box. He took it out and put it under his arm, locked the safe and left the room.

In the outer office all the clerks were busy, and Brownlow was in his room with the door shut.

Simon, with the wallet under his arm, walked out and passed through the precincts of Old Serjeants' Inn to Fleet Street, where a waft of warm summer, yet springlike, wind met him in the face.

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE SOUL'S AWAKENING

HE raised his head, sniffed as if inhaling something, and quickened his step. What a glorious day it was; even Fleet Street had a touch of youth about it.

A flower-woman and her wares caught his eye; he bought a bunch of late violets and, with his hat tilted back, dived in his trousers' pocket and produced a handful of silver. He gave her a shilling and, without asking for change, walked on, the violets in his buttonhole.

He was making west like a homing pigeon. He walked like a man in a hurry but with no purpose, his glance skimmed things and seemed to rest only on things coloured or pleasant to look on, his eyes showed no speculation. He seemed like a person with no more past than a dreamer. The present seemed to him everything—just as it is to the dreamer.

In the Strand he stopped here and there to glance at the contents of shops; neckties attracted him. Then Fuller's drew him in by

its colour. He had a vanilla-and-strawberry ice and chatted to the girls, who did not receive his advances, however, with much favour.

Then he came to Romanos'; it attracted him, and he went in. Gilded youths were drinking at the bar, and a cocktail being mixed by the bar-tender fascinated Simon by its colour; he had one like it, chatted to the man, paid, and walked out.

It was now eleven.

Still walking gaily and lightly, as one walks in a happy dream, he reached the Charing Cross Hotel, asked the porter to show him the rooms he had reserved, and enquired if his luggage had come.

The luggage had come and was deposited in the bedroom of the suite: two large brand-new portmanteaux and a hat-box, also a band-box from Lincoln Bennett's.

The portmanteaux and hat-box were locked, but in the band-box were the keys, gummed up in an envelope; there was also a straw hat in the band-box—a boater.

The porter, having unstrapped the portmanteaux, departed with a tip, and our gentleman began to unpack swiftly and with the eagerness of a child going to a party.

O Youth! What a star thou art, yet what a

folly! And yet can all wisdom give one the pleasure of one's first ball-dress, of the young man's brand-new suit? And there were brand-new suits and to spare, check tweed, blue serge, boating flannels; shoes, too, and boots from the Burlington Arcade, ties and socks from Beale and Inman's.

It was like a trousseau.

As he unpacked he whistled. Whistled a tune that was young in the sixties—" Champagne Charley," no less.

Then he dressed, vigorously digging his head into a striped shirt, donning a purple tie, purple socks, and a grey tweed suit of excellent cut.

All his movements were feverish, light, rapid. He did not seem to notice the details of the room around him; he seemed skimming along the surface of things in a hurry to get to some goal of pleasure. Flushed and bright-eyed, he scarcely looked fifty now, yet, despite this reduction in age, his general get-up had a touch of the raffish. Purple socks and ties are a bit off at fifty; a straw " boater " does not reduce the effect, nor do tan shoes.

But Simon was quite satisfied with himself.

Still whistling, he bundled his old things away in a drawer and left the other things lying about for the servants to put away, and sat down on

the side of the bed with the wallet in his hands.

He opened it and turned the notes out on the quilt. The gorgeous bundle to "bust" or do what he liked with held him in its thrall as he turned over the contents, not counting the amount, but just reviewing the notes and the huge sums on most of them.

Heavens! What a delight even in a dream! To be young and absolutely free from all restraint, free from all ties, unconscious of relatives, unconscious of everything but immediate surroundings, with virginal appetites and desires and countless sovereigns to meet them with. Dangling his heels, and with his straw hat beside him, he gloated on his treasure; then, picking out three ten-pound notes and putting the remainder in the wallet, he locked the wallet away in his portmanteau and put the key under the wardrobe.

Then, leaving his room, he came downstairs with his straw hat on the back of his head and a smile for a pretty chambermaid who passed him coming up.

The girl laughed and glanced back, but whether she was laughing at or with him it would be hard to say. Chambermaids have strange tastes.

It was in the hall that he met Moxon, senior partner in Plunder's, the great bill-discounting firm; a tall man, serious of face and manner.

"Why, God bless my soul, Pettigrew!" cried Moxon, "I scarcely knew you."

"You have the advantage of me, old cock," replied Simon airily, "for I'm —— if I ever met you before."

"My mistake," said Moxon.

It was Pettigrew's face and voice, but all the rest was not Pettigrew, and the discounter of bills hurried off, feeling as though he had come across the uncanny—which he had.

Simon paused at the office, holding a lady clerk in light conversation about the weather and turning upon her that sprightly wit already mentioned. She was busy and stiff, and the weather and his wit didn't seem to interest her. Then he asked for change of a ten-pound note, and she gave it to him in sovereigns; then he asked for change of a sovereign—she gave it to him; then he asked, with a grin, for change of a shilling. She was outraged now; that which ought to have made her laugh seemed to incense her. Do what he could, he couldn't warm her.

She was colder than the ice-cream girls. What the devil was the matter with them all? She

slapped the change for the shilling down and turned away to her books.

Tilting his hat further back, he rapped with a penny on the ledge.

She got up.

"Well, what is it now?"

"Can you change me a penny, please?" said Simon.

"Mrs. Jones!" called the girl.

A stout lady manageress in black appeared.

"I don't know what this gentleman means."

The manageress raised her eyebrows at the jester.

"I asked the young lady for change of a penny. Can you let me have two halfpence for a penny, please?"

The manageress opened the till and gave the change. The gay one departed, chuckling. He had had the best of the girl, silly creature, that could not take a joke in good part—but he had enjoyed himself.

Moving in the line of least resistance towards the phantom of pleasure, he made for the hotel entrance and the sunlight showing through the door, bought a cigar at the kiosk outside, and then bundled into a taxi.

"Where to, sir?" asked the driver.

"First bar," replied Simon. "First decent one, and look sharp."

The surly driver—Heavens, how the old hansom cabby of the sixties would have hailed such a fare, and with what joy!—closed the door without a word and started winding up the engine. He had difficulties, and as he went on winding the occupant put his head out of the window and addressed the station policeman who was looking on.

"Has the chap a licence for a barrel-organ?" asked Simon. "If he hasn't, ask him to drive on."

He shut the window. They started, and stopped at a bar in Leicester Square. Simon paid and entered.

It was a long bar, a glittering, loathsome, noxious place where, behind a long counter, six barmaids were serving all sorts of men with all sorts of drinks.

Simon seemed to find it all right. Puffing his cigar, he ordered a brandy cold—a brandy cold! And sipping his brandy cold, he took stock of the men around.

Even his innocence and newness—despite the crave for companionship now on him—recognised that there were undesirables, and as for the bar girls, they were frozen images—for him.

They were laughing and changing words with all sorts of young men—counter-jumpers and horsey men—but for him they had nothing but brandy cold and monosyllables. He was beginning to get irritated with woman; but the sunlight outside and two cold brandies inside restored his happy humour, and the idea of lunch was now moving before him, luring him on.

Thinking thus, he was advancing not towards luncheon but towards Fate.

At Piccadilly Circus there was a crowd round an omnibus. There generally are crowds round omnibuses just here, but this was a special crowd, having for its core an irate bus conductor and a pretty girl.

Oh, such a pretty girl! Spring itself, dark-haired, dark-eyed, well dressed, but with just that touch which tells of want of affluence. She fascinated Simon as a flower fascinates a bee.

"But, sir, I tell you I have lost my purse; some pocket-picker has taken it. I shall be pleased to tell you where I live and reward you if you come for the money. My name is Cerise Rossignol." This, with just a trace of foreign accent.

"I've been done twice this week by that game," said the brutal conductor, speaking,

however, the truth. "Come, search in your glove, you'll find it."

Simon broke in.

"How much?" said he.

"Tuppence," said the conductor. Then the gods that preside over youth might have observed this new Andromeda, released at the charge of Tuppence, wandering off with her saviour and turning to him a face filled with gratitude.

They were going in the direction of Leicester Square.

CHAPTER II

MOXON AND MUDD

NOW, Moxon had come up that morning from Framlingham in Kent, where he was taking a holiday, to transact some business. Amongst other things he had to see Simon Pettigrew on a question about some bills.

The apparition he had encountered in the hall of the Charing Cross Hotel pursued him to Plunder's office, where he first went, and, when he left Plunder's for luncheon at Prosser's, in Chancery Lane, it still pursued him.

Though he knew it could not be Pettigrew, some uneasy spirit in his subconsciousness kept insisting that it was Pettigrew.

At two o'clock he called at Old Serjeants' Inn. He saw Brownlow, who had just returned from lunch.

No, Mr. Pettigrew was not in. He had gone out that morning early and had not returned.

"I must see him," said Moxon. "When do you think he will be in?"

Brownlow couldn't say.

"Would he be at his house, do you think?"

"Hardly," said Brownlow; "he might have gone home, but I think it's improbable."

"I must see him," said Moxon again. "It's extraordinary. Why, I wrote to him telling him I was coming this afternoon and he knows the importance of my business."

"Mr. Pettigrew hasn't opened his morning letters yet," said Brownlow.

"Good Lord!" said Moxon.

Then, after a pause:

"Will you telephone to his house to see?"

"Mr. Pettigrew has no telephone," said Brownlow; "he dislikes them, except in business."

Moxon remembered this and other old-fashioned traits in Pettigrew; the remembrance did not ease his irritation.

"Then I'll go to his house myself," said he.

When he arrived at King Charles Street, Mudd opened the door.

Mudd and Moxon were mutually known one to the other, Moxon having often dined there.

"Is your master in, Mudd?" asked Moxon.

"No, sir," answered Mudd; "he's not at home, and mayn't be at home for some time."

'What do you mean?"

"He left me directions that if he wasn't at the office when the brougham called to take him to luncheon I was to tell the office he was called away; the coachman has just come back to say he wasn't there, so I am sending him back to the office to tell them."

"Called away! For how long?"

"Well, it might be a month," said Mudd, remembering.

"Extraordinary!" said Moxon. "Well, I can't help it, and I can't wait; I must take my business elsewhere. I thought I saw Mr. Pettigrew in the Charing Cross Hotel, but he was dressed differently and seemed strange. Well, this is a great nuisance, but it can't be helped, I suppose. . . . A month . . ."

Off he went in a huff.

Mudd watched him as he went, then he closed the hall door. Then he sat down on one of the hall chairs.

"Dressed differently and seemed strange." It only wanted those words to start alarm in the mind of Mudd.

The affair of a year ago had always perplexed him, and now this!

"Seemed strange."

Could it be? . . . H'm. . . . He got up and went downstairs.

"Why, what's the matter with you, Mr. Mudd?" asked the cook-housekeeper. "Why, you're all of a shake."

"It's my stomach," said Mudd.

He took a glass of ginger wine, then he fetched his hat.

"I'm going out to get the air," said Mudd. "I mayn't be back for some time; don't bother about me if I aren't, and be sure to lock up the plate."

"God bless my soul, what's the matter with the man?" murmured the astonished housekeeper as Mudd vanished. "Blest if he isn't getting as queer as his master!"

Out in the street Mudd paused to blow his nose in a bandanna handkerchief just like Simon's. Then, as though this act had started his mechanism, off he went, hailed an omnibus in the next street, and got off at Charing Cross.

He entered the Charing Cross Hotel.

"Is a Mr. Pettigrew here?" asked Mudd of the hall porter.

The hall porter grinned.

"Yes, there's a Mr. Pettigrew staying here, but he's out."

"Well, I'm his servant," said Mudd.

"Staying here with him?" asked the porter.

"Yes. I've followed him on. What's the number of his room?"

"The office will know," replied the other.

"Well, just go to the office and get his key," said Mudd, "and send a messenger boy to No. 12, King Charles Street—that's our address—to tell Mrs. Jukes, the housekeeper, I won't be able to get back to-night maybe. Here's a shilling for him—but show me his room first."

Mudd carried conviction.

The hall porter went to the office.

"Key of Mr. Pettigrew's room," said he; "his servant has just come."

The superior damsel detached herself from book-keeping, looked up the number and gave the key.

Mudd took it and went up in the lift. He opened the door of the room and went in. The place had not been tidied, clothes lay everywhere.

Mudd, like a cat in a strange house, looked around. Then he shut the door.

Then he took up a coat and looked at the maker's name on the tab.

"Holland and Woolson"—Simon's tailors!

Then he examined all the garments. Such garments! Boating flannels, serge suits! Then the shoes, the patent leather boots. He opened

the chest of drawers and found the bundle of discarded clothes—the old coat with the left elbow " going," and the rest. He held them up, examined them, folded them and put them back.

Then he sat down to recover himself, blew his nose, wondered whether he or Simon were crazy, and then, rising up, began to fold and put away the new things in the wardrobe and chest-of-drawers.

He noticed that one of the portmanteaux was locked. Yet there was something in it that slid up and down as he tilted and lowered it.

Having looked round the room once again, he went downstairs, gave up the key, made arrangements for his room, and started out.

He made for Sackville Street. Meyer, the foreman of Holland and Woolson's, was known to him. He had sometimes called regarding Simon's clothes with directions for this or that.

" That blue serge suit you've just sent for Mr. Pettigrew don't quite rightly fit, Mr. Meyer," said the cunning Mudd. " I had the coat done up in a parcel to bring back to you for the sleeves to be shortened half an inch, but I forgot it; only remembered I'd forgot it at your door."

" We'll send for it," said Meyer.

" Right," said Mudd. Then, " No—on second thoughts, I'll fetch it myself when I have a

moment to spare, for we're going from home for a few days. Mr. Pettigrew has had a good lot of clothes lately, Mr. Meyer."

"He has," said Meyer, with a twinkle in his eye; "suits and suits, almost as if he were going to be married."

"Married!" cried the other. "What put that into your head, Mr. Meyer? He's not a marrying man. Why, I've never seen him as much as glance an eye at a female."

"Oh, it was only my joke," said Meyer.

Now, in Mudd's soul there had lain for years an uneasiness, a crumpled rose-leaf of thought that touched him sometimes as he turned at night in bed. It was the fear that some day Simon might ruin Mudd's life with a mistress. He couldn't stand a mistress. He had always sworn that to himself; the experience of fellow butlers whose lives were made loathsome by mistresses would have been enough without his own deep-rooted antipathy to females, except as spectacular objects. Mrs. Jukes was a relation of his, and he could stand her; the maid-servants were automata beneath his notice—but a mistress!

Mad alarm filled his mind, for his heart told him that the words of Meyer had foundation in probability.

That affair of last year, when Simon had departed and returned in new strange clothes, might have been the courting, this the real thing?

He left the tailor's, called a taxi and drove to the office.

Brownlow was in.

"What is it, Mudd?" asked Brownlow, as the latter was shown into his room.

"Did you get my message, Mr. Brownlow?" asked Mudd.

"Yes."

"Oh, that's all right," said Mudd. "I just thought I'd call and ask. The master told me to send the message; he's going away for a bit. Wants a change, too. I think he's been overworking lately, Mr. Brownlow."

"He's always overworking," said Brownlow. "I think he's been suffering from brain-fag, Mudd; he's very reticent about himself, but I'm glad he saw a doctor."

"Saw a doctor! Why, he never told me."

"Didn't he? Well, he did—Dr. Oppenshaw, of Harley Street. This is between you and me. Try and make him rest more, Mudd."

"I will," said Mudd. "He wants rest. I've been uneasy about him a long while. What's the

doctor's number in Harley Street, Mr. Brownlow?"

"110A," said Brownlow, picking the number out of his marvellous memory; "but don't let Mr. Pettigrew know I told you. He's very touchy about himself."

"I won't."

Off he went.

"Faithful old servitor," thought Brownlow.

The faithful old servitor got into a taxi. "110A, Harley Street," said he to the driver; "and drive quick and I'll give you an extra tuppence."

Oppenshaw was in.

When he was informed that Pettigrew's servant had called to see him, he turned over a duchess he was engaged on, gave her a harmless prescription, bowed her out and rang the bell.

Mudd was shown in.

"I've come to ask——" said Mudd.

"Sit down," said Oppenshaw

"I've come to speak——"

"I know; about your master. How is he?"

"Well, I've come to ask you, sir; he's at the Charing Cross Hotel at present."

"Has he gone there to live?"

"Well, he's there."

"I saw him some time ago about the state of

his health, and, frankly, Mr. Mudd, it's serious."

Mudd nodded.

"Tell me," said Oppenshaw, "has he been buying new clothes?"

"Heaps; no end," said Mudd. "And such clothes—things he's never worn before."

"So? Well, it's fortunate you found him. What is his conversation like? Have you talked to him much?"

"I haven't seen him yet," Mudd explained.

"Well, stay close to him, and be very careful. He is suffering from a form of mental upset. You must cross him as little as possible, use persuasion, gentle persuasion. The thing will run its course. It mustn't be suddenly checked."

"Is he mad?" asked the other.

"No, but he is not himself—or rather, he is himself—in a different way; but a sudden check might make him mad. You have heard of people walking in their sleep—well, this is something akin to that. You know it is highly dangerous to awaken a sleep-walker suddenly. Well, it's just the same with Mr. Pettigrew; it might unbalance his mind for good."

"What am I to do?"

"Just keep watch on him."

"But suppose he don't know me?"

"He won't know you, but if you are kind to him he will accept you into his environment, and then you will link on to his mental state."

"He's out now, and God knows where, or doing what," said Mudd; "but I'll be on the watch for him coming in—if he ever comes."

"Oh, he will come home right enough."

"Is there any fear of those women getting hold of him?" asked Mudd, returning to his old dread.

"That's just what there is—every fear; but you must be very careful not to interpose your will violently. Get gently between, gently between. You understand me. Suggestion does a lot in these cases. Another thing, you must treat him as one treats a boy. You must imagine to yourself that your master is only twenty, for that, in truth, is what he is. He has gone back to a younger state—or rather, a younger state has come to meet him, having lain dormant, just as a wisdom tooth lies dormant, then grows."

"Oh, Lord!" said Mudd. "I never did think I'd live to see this day."

"Oh, it might be worse."

"I don't see."

"Well, from what I can make out of his youth, it was not a vicious one, only foolish;

had he been vicious when young he might be terrible now."

"The first solicitor in London," said Mudd in a dreary voice.

"Well, he's not the first solicitor in London to make a fool of himself, nor will he be the last. Cheer up and keep your eyes open and do your duty· no man can do more than that."

"Shall I send for you, doctor, if he gets worse?"

"Well," said Oppenshaw; "from what you tell me he couldn't be much worse. Oh no, don't bother to send—unless, of course, the thing took a different course, and he were to become violent without reason; but that won't happen, you can take my word for it."

Mudd departed.

He walked all the way back to the Charing Cross Hotel, but instead of entering, he suddenly took a taxi, and returned to Charles Street. Here he packed some things in a handbag, and having again given directions to Mrs. Jukes to lock up the plate, he told her he might be some time gone.

"I'm going with the master on some law business," said Mudd. "Make sure and bolt the front door—and lock up the plate."

It was the third or fourth time he had given her these instructions.

"He's out of his mind," said Mrs. Jukes, as she watched him go. She wasn't far wrong.

Mudd had been used to a rut—a rut forty years deep. His light and pleasant duties carried him easily through the day. Of evenings when Simon was dining out he would join a social circle in the private room of a highly respectable tavern close by, smoke his pipe, drink two hot gins, and depart for home at ten-thirty. When Simon was in he could smoke his pipe and read his paper in his own private room. He had five hundred pounds laid by in the bank—no stocks and shares for Mudd—and he would vary his evening amusements by counting the toll of his money.

It is easy to be seen that this jolt out of the rut was, literally, a jolt.

At the Charing Cross Hotel he found the room allotted to him, deposited his things and, disdaining the servants' quarters, went out to a tavern to read the paper.

He reckoned Simon might not return till late, and he reckoned right.

CHAPTER III

SIMON'S OLD-FASHIONED NIGHT IN TOWN

MADAME ROSSIGNOL was a charming old lady of sixty, a production of France—no other country could have produced her. She lived in Duke Street, Leicester Square, supporting herself and her daughter Cerise by translating English books into French. Cerise did millinery. Madame combined absolute innocence with absolute instinct. She knew all about things; her innocence was not ignorance, it was purity—rising above a knowledge of the world, and disdaining to look at evil.

She was dreadfully poor.

Her love for Cerise was like a disease always preying upon her. Should she die, what would happen to Cerise?

Behold these together clasped in each other's arms. Set in the shabby sitting-room, it might have been a scene at the Port St. Martin.

"Oh, mother," murmured the girl, "is he not good!"

"He is more than good," said Madame. "Most surely the *bon Dieu* sent him to be your guardian angel."

"Is he not charming?" went on Cerise, unlinking herself from the maternal embrace and touching her hair into order again with a little laugh. "So different from the leaden-faced English, so gay and yet so—so——"

"There is a something—I do not know what—about him," said the old lady; "something of Romance. Is it not like a little tale of Madame Perichon's or a little play of Monsieur Baree? Might he not just have come in as in one of those? You go out, lose your purse, are lost. I sit waiting for you at your non-return in this wilderness of London; you return, but not alone. With you comes the Marquis de Grandcourt, who bows and says, 'Madame, I return you your daughter; I ask in return your friendship. I am alone, like you; let us then be friends.' I reply, 'Monsieur, you behold our poverty, but you cannot behold our hearts or the gratitude in my mind.' What a little story!"

"And how he laughed, and said, 'Hang monee!'" cut in Cerise. "What means that 'hang monee!' maman? And how he pulled out all the gold pieces like a boy, saying, 'I am rich!'—just as a little boy might say, 'I am

rich! I am rich!' No bourgeois could have done that without offending, without giving one a shiver of the skin."

"You have said it," replied Madame. "A little boy—a great and good man, yet a little boy. He is not in his first youth, but there are people, like Pierre Pan, who never lose youth. It is so; I have seen it."

"Simon Pattigrew," murmured Cerise, with a little laugh.

A knock came to the door and a little maid-of-all-work, and down at heel, entered with a huge bouquet, one of those bouquets youth flings at *prima donnas*.

Simon, after leaving the Rossignols, had struck a flower shop—this was the result. A piece of paper accompanied the bouquet, and on the paper, written in a handwriting that hitherto had only appeared on letters of business and documents of law, were the words: "From your Friend."

Simon, having struck the flower shop, might have struck a fruit shop and a bonnet shop, only that the joy of love, the love that comes at first sight, the love of dreams, made him incapable of any more business—even the business of buying presents for his fascinator.

It was now five o'clock, and, pursuing his way

West, he found Piccadilly. He passed girls without looking at them—he saw only the vision of Cerise. She led him as far as St. George's Hospital, as though leading him away from the temptations of the West, but the gloomy prospect of Knightsbridge headed him off, and, turning, he came back. Big houses, signs of wealth and prosperity, seemed to hold him in a charm, just as he was held by all things pretty, coloured, or dazzling.

A glittering restaurant drew him in presently, and here he had a jovial dinner; all alone, it is true, but with plenty to look at.

He had also a half-bottle of champagne and a maraschino.

He had already consumed that day a cocktail coloured, two glasses of brandy-and-water cold and a half-bottle of champagne. His ordinary consumption of alcohol was moderate. A glass of green-seal sherry at twelve, and a half-bottle of St. Estéphe at lunch, and, shall we say, a small whisky-and-soda at dinner, or, if dining out or with guests, a couple of glasses of Pommery.

And to-day he had been drinking restaurant champagne "*tres sec*"—and two half-bottles of it! The excess was beginning to tell. It told in the slight flush on his cheeks, which, strange to

say, did not make him look younger; it told in the tip he gave the waiter, and in the way he put on his hat. He had bought a walking-stick during his peregrinations, a dandy stick with a tassel—the passing fashion had just come in—and with this under his arm he left the café in search of pleasures new.

The West End was now ablaze, and the theatres filling. Simon, like Poe's man of the crowd, kept with the crowd; a blaze of lights attracted him as a lamp a moth.

The Pallaceum sucked him in. Here, in a blue haze of tobacco-smoke and to the tune of a band, he sat for awhile watching the show, roaring with laughter at the comic turns, pleased with the conjuring business, and fascinated—despite Cerise—with the girl in tights who did acrobatic tricks aided by two poodles and a monkey.

Then he found the bar, and there he stood adding fuel to pleasure, his stick under his arm, his hat tilted back, a new cigar in his mouth, and a smile on his face—a smile with a suggestion of fixity. Alas! if Cerise could have seen the Marquis de Grandcourt now!—or was it Madame who raised him to the peerage of France? If she could have been by to just raise her eyebrows at him! Yet she was there, in a

way, for the ladies of the *foyer* who glanced at him not unkindly, taken perhaps by his *bonhomie,* and smiling demeanour and atmosphere of wealth and enjoyment, found no response. Yet he found momentary acquaintances, of a sort. A couple of University men up in town for a lark seemed to find him part of the lark; they all drank together, exchanged views, and then the University men vanished, giving place to a gentleman in a very polished hat, with diamond studs, and a face like a hawk, who suggested "fizz," a small bottle of which was consumed mostly by the hawk, who then vanished, leaving Simon to pay.

Simon ordered another, paid for it, forgot it, and found himself in the entrance hall calling in a loud voice for a hansom.

A taxi was procured for him and the door opened. He got inside and said, "Wait a moment—one moment."

Then he began paying half-crowns to the commissionaire who had opened the taxi door for him. "That's for your trouble," said Simon. "That's for your trouble. That's for your trouble. Where am I? Oh yes—shut that confounded door, will you, and tell the chap to drive on!"

"Where to, sir?"

Oppenshaw would have been interested in the fact that champagne beyond a certain amount had the effect of wakening Simon's remote past. He answered:

"Evans'."

Consultation outside.

"Evans's? Which Evans's? There ain't no such 'otel, there ain't no such bar. Ask him which Evans's?"

"Which Evanses did you say, sir?" asked the commissionaire, putting his head in. "The driver don't know which you mean. Where does it lay?"

He got a chuck under the chin that nearly drove his head to the roof of the taxi.

Then Simon's head popped out of the window. It looked up and down the street.

"Where's that chap that put his head through the window?" asked Simon.

A small crowd and a policeman drew round. "What is it, sir?" asked the policeman.

Simon seemed calculating the distance with a view to the bonneting of the enquirer. Then he seemed to find the distance too far.

"Tell him to drive me to the Argyle Rooms," said he. Then he vanished.

Another council outside, the commissionaire presiding.

"Take him to the Leicester 'Otel. Why, Lord bless me! the Argyle Rooms has been closed this forty years. Take him round about and let him have a snooze."

The taximan started with the full intention of robbery—not by force, but by strategy. Robbery on the clock. It was not theatre turning-out time yet, and he would have the chance of earning a few dishonest shillings. He turned every corner he could, for every time a taxi turns a corner the "clock" increases in speed. He drove here and there, but he never reached the Leicester 'Otel, for in Full Moon Street, the home of bishops and earls, the noise inside the vehicle made him halt. He opened the door and Simon burst out, radiant with humour and now much steadier on his legs.

"How much?" said Simon, and then, without waiting for a reply, thrust half a handful of coppers and silver into the fist of the taximan, hit him a slap on the top of his flat cap that made him see stars, and walked off.

The man did not pursue, he was counting his takings: eleven-and-fivepence, no less.

"Crazy," said he; then he started his engine and went off, utterly unconscious of the fact that he had entertained and driven something worthy to be preserved in the British

Museum—a real live reveller of the sixties.

The full moon was shining on Full Moon Street, an old street that still preserves in front of its houses the sockets for the torches of the linkmen. It does not require much imagination to see phantom sedan chairs in Full Moon Street on a night like this, or the watchman on his rounds, and to-night the old street—if old streets have memories—must surely have stirred in its dreams, for, as Simon went on his way, the night began suddenly to be filled with cat-calls.

A lady airing a Pom whisked her treasure into the house as Simon passed, and shut the door with a bang; such a bang that the knocker gave a jump and Simon a hint.

Ten yards further on he went up steps, paused before a hall door that, in daylight, would have been green, and took the knocker.

Just a few turns of his wrist and the knocker was his, a glorious brass knocker, weighing half a pound. No other young man in London that night could have done the business like that or shown such dexterity in an art lost as the art of pinchbeck-making.

He collected two more knockers in that street, retaining only one as a trophy. He threw the others into an area, pulled the house door-bell violently, and ran.

In Berkeley Square he was just beginning to deal with another knocker, when the door opened to an elderly woman of the housekeeper type and a dachshund.

"What do you want?" asked the housekeeper.

"Does the Duke of Cu-cu-cumberland live here?" hiccupped Simon.

"No, sir, he does not."

"Sorry—sorry—sorry," said Simon. "My mistake—entirely my mistake. Very sorry to trouble you indeed. What a pretty little dog! What's his name?"

He was entirely affable now, and, forgetful of knockers, wished to strike up a friendship, a desire unshared evidently by the lady.

"I think you had better go away," said she, recognising a gentleman and mourning the fact.

He considered this proposition deeply for a moment.

"That's all very well," said he, "but where am I to go? That's the question."

"You had better go home."

This seemed slightly to irritate him.

"*I'm* not going home—*this* time of night—not likely." He began to descend the steps as if to get away from admonition. "Not me; you can go home yourself."

Off he went.

He walked three times round Berkeley Square. He met a constable, enquired where that street ended and when, found sympathy in return for half-crowns, and was mothered into a straighter street.

Half-way down the straighter street he remembered he hadn't shown the sympathetic constable his door-knocker, but the policeman, fortunately, had passed out of sight.

Then he stood for awhile remembering Cerise. Her vision had suddenly appeared before him; it threw him into deep melancholy—profound melancholy. He went on till the lights and noise of Piccadilly restored him. Then, further on, he entered a flaming doorway through which came the music of a band.

PART III

CHAPTER I

THE LAST SOVEREIGN

ON the morning of the fourth of June, the same morning on which Simon had broken like a butterfly from his chrysalis of long-moulded custom and stiff routine, Mr. Bobby Ravenshaw, nephew and only near relation of Simon Pettigrew, awoke in his chambers in Pactolus Mansions, Piccadilly, yawned, rang for his tea, and, picking up the book he had put beside him on dropping to sleep, began to read.

The book was *Monte Cristo*. Now Pactolus Mansions, Piccadilly, sounds a very grand address, and, as a matter of fact, it is a grand address, but the address is grander than the place. For one thing, it is not in Piccadilly, the approach is up a dubious side street; the word "Pactolus" bears little relationship to it, nor the word "Mansions," and the rents are moderate. Downstairs there is a restaurant and a lounge with cosy corners.

People take chambers in Pactolus Mansions and vanish. The fact is never reported to the Society for Psychical Research, the levitation being always accountable for by solid reasons. To stop them from vanishing before their rent is paid they have to pay their rent in advance. No credit is given under any circumstances. This seems hard, yet there are the compensating advantages that the rent is low, the service good, and the address taking.

Bobby Ravenshaw had chosen to live in Pactolus Mansions because it was the cheapest place he could get near the gayest place in town.

Bobby was an orphan, an Oxford man without a degree, and with a taste for literature and fine clothes. Absolutely irresponsible. Five hundred a year, derived from Simon, of whose only sister he was the son, and an instinct for bridge that was worth another two hundred and fifty supported Bobby in a lame sort of way, assisted by friends, confiding tailors and bootmakers, and a genial moneylender who was also a cigar merchant.

Bobby had started in life a year or two ago with cleverness of no mean order and the backing of money, but Fate had dealt him out two bad cards: a nature that was charming and irresponsible, and good looks. Girls wor-

shipped Bobby, and if his talents had only cast him on the stage their worship might have helped. As it was, it hindered, for Bobby was a literary man, and no girl has ever bought a book on the strength of the good looks of the author.

His tea having arrived, Bobby drank it, finished the chapter in *Monte Cristo* and then rose and dressed.

He was leaving Pactolus Mansions that day for the very good reason that, if he wished to stay beyond twelve o'clock, he would have to pay a month's rent in advance, and he only had thirty shillings.

Uncle Simon had "foreclosed." That was Bobby's expression, a month ago. For a month Bobby had watched the sands running down; no more money to come in and all the time money running out. Absolutely unalarmed, and only noticing the fact as he might have noticed a change in the weather, he had made no provision, trusting to chance, to bridge that betrayed him, and to friends. Literature could not help. He had got into a wrong groove as far as moneymaking went. Little articles for literary papers of limited circulation and a really cultivated taste are not the immediate means to financial support in a world that devours its fictional literature like ham sandwiches, forgotten

as soon as eaten—and only fictional literature pays.

He was thinking more of *Monte Cristo* than of his own position as he dressed. The fact that he had to look out for other rooms worried him as an uncomfortable business to be performed, but not much. If he couldn't get other rooms that day he could always stay with Tozer. Tozer was an Oxford man with chambers in the Albany—chambers always open to Bobby at any hour. A sure stand-by in trouble.

Then, having dressed, he took his hat and stick and the sovereign and half-sovereign lying on the mantel, tipped the servant the half-sovereign, and ordered that his things should be packed and his luggage taken to the office to be left till he called for it.

"I'm going to the country," said Bobby, "and I'll send my address for letters to be forwarded."

Then he started.

He called first at the Albany.

Tozer, the son of a big, defunct Manchester cotton merchant, was a man of some twenty-three years, red-haired, with a taste for the good things of life, a taste for boxing, a taste for music, and a hard common sense that never deserted him even in his gayest and most frivo-

lous moods. His chambers were newly furnished, the walls of the sitting-room adorned with old prints, mostly proofs before letter; boxing gloves and single-sticks hinted of themselves, and a violoncello stood in the corner.

He was at breakfast when Bobby arrived. Tozer rang for another cup and plate.

"Tozer," said Bobby, "I'm bust."

"Aren't surprised to hear it," replied Tozer. "Try these kippers."

"One single sovereign in the world, my boy, and I'm hunting for new rooms."

"What's the matter with your old rooms? Have they kicked you out?"

Bobby explained.

"Good Lord!" said Tozer. "You've cut the ground from under your feet, staying at a place like that."

"It's not all my fault, it's my relative. I always boasted to him that I paid my rent in advance; he took it as a sign of wisdom."

"What made him go back on you?"

"A girl."

"Which way?"

"Well, it was this way. I was staying with the Huntingdons, you know, the Warwickshire lot."

"I know—bridge and brandy crowd."

"Oh, they're all right. Well, I was staying with them when I met her."

"What's her name?"

"Alice Carruthers."

"Heave ahead."

"I got engaged to her; she hadn't a penny."

"Just like you."

"And her people haven't a penny, and I wrote like a fool telling the relative. He gave me the option of cutting her off or being cut off. It seems her people were the real obstacle. He wrote quite libellous things about them. I refused."

"Of course."

"And he cut me off. Well, the funny thing was she cut me off a week later, and she's engaged now to a chap called Harkness."

"Well, why don't you tell the relative and make it up?"

"Tell him she'd fired me! Besides, it's no use, he'd just go on to other things—what he calls extravagances and irresponsibilities."

"I see."

"That's just how it is."

"Look here, Bobby," said Tozer, "you've just got to cut all this nonsense and get to work. You've been making a fool of yourself."

"I have," said Bobby, helping himself to marmalade.

"There's no use saying, 'I have,' and then forgetting. I know you. You're a good sort, Bobby, but you are in the wrong set; you couldn't keep the pace. You've loads of cleverness and you're going to rot. Work!"

"How?"

"Write," said Tozer, who believed in Bobby and hated to see him going to waste. "Write. I've always been urging you to settle down and write."

"I made five pounds ten last year writing," said Bobby.

"I know—articles on old French poetry and so on. You've got to write fiction. You can do it. That little story you wrote for Tillson's was ripping."

"The devil of it is," said Bobby, "I can't find plots. I can write all right if I have only something to write about, but I can't find plots."

"That's rubbish, and pure laziness. Can't find plots, with your experience of London and life! You've got to find plots, and find them sharp; it's the only trade open to you. You can do it, and it pays. Now look here, B. R. I'll finance you——"

"Thanks awfully," said Bobby, helping himself to a cigarette from a box on a little table near by.

"Reserve your thanks. I'm not going to finance a slacker, which you are at present, but a hard-working literary man, which you will be when I have done with you. I will give you a room here on the strict conditions that you keep early hours five days a week."

"Yes."

"That you give up bridge."

"Yes."

"And fooling after girls."

"Yes."

"And this day set out and find a plot for a good, honest, payable piece of fiction, novel length. I'm not going to let you off with short-story writing."

"Yes."

"I know a good publisher, and I will assure you that the thing shall be published in the best form, that I will back the advertising and pushing—see? And I will promise you that, however the thing turns out, you shall have two hundred pounds. You will get all profits if it is a success, understand me?"

"Yes."

"You shall have five pounds a week pocket-money whilst you are writing, to be repaid out of profits if the profits exceed two hundred, not to be repaid if they don't."

"I don't like taking money for nothing," said Bobby.

"You won't get it, only for hard work. Besides, it's for my amusement and interest. I believe in you, and I want to see my belief justified. You need never bother about taking money from me. First, I have plenty; secondly, I never give it without a *quid pro quo,* the trading instinct is too strong in me."

"Well," said Bobby, "it's jolly good of you, and I'll pay you the lot back, if——"

Tozer was lighting a cigarette; he flung the match down impatiently.

"If! You'll do nothing if you begin with an 'if.' Now, make up your mind quick without any 'ifs.' Will you, or won't you?"

"I will," said Bobby, suddenly catching on to the idea and taking fire. "I believe I can do it if——"

"If!" shouted Tozer.

"I *will* do it. I'll find a plot. I'll dig in my brains right away—I'll hunt round."

"Off with you, then," said Tozer, "and send your luggage here and come back to-night with your plot. You can work in your bedroom and you can have all your meals here—I forgot to include that. Now I'm going to have a tune on the 'cello."

Bobby departed with a light heart. His position, before calling on Tozer, had really begun to weigh on him. Tozer had given him even more than the promise of financial support, he had given him the backing of his common sense. He had "jawed" him mildly, and Bobby felt all the better for it. It was like a tonic. His high spirits as he descended the stairs increased with every step taken.

Bobby was no sponge. Bridge and the relative had kept him going, and he had always managed to meet his debts, with the exception, perhaps, of a tradesman or two; nor would he have taken this favour from any other man than Tozer, and perhaps not even from Tozer had it not been accompanied by the "jawing."

So he set out, light of heart, young, good-looking, well-dressed, yet with only a sovereign, to hunt through the summer landscape of London for the plot for a novel.

Why, he was the plot for a novel, or at least the beginning of one, had he known!

He did not, but he had an intimate knowledge of Tozer's fictional proclivities and a fine understanding of exactly what Tozer wanted. Bones, ribs, and vertebra, construction—or, in other words, story. Tozer could not be fubbed

off with fine writing, with long introspective chapters dealing with the boyhood of the author, with sham psychology masquerading as Fiction; nor, indeed, could Bobby have supplied the two latter features. Tozer wanted action, people moving on their feet under the dominion of the author's purpose, through situations, towards a definite goal.

Out in Vigo Street, and despite the aura of inspiration around the Bodley Head, Bobby's high spirits came slightly under eclipse; it all at once seemed to him that he had undertaken a task. In Cork Street, as he stood for a moment looking at the rare editions exposed in the windows of Elkin Mathews, this feeling grew and put on horns.

A task to Bobby meant a thing disagreeable to do, and the elegant volumes of minor poets, copies of the Yellow Book, and vellum-bound editions of belles lettres were saying to him, " You've got to write a novel, my boy, a good Mudie novel, the sort of novel the Tozers of life will pay for; no little essays written with the little finger turned up. No modern verses like your ' Harmonies and Discords,' that cost you twenty-five pounds to produce and sold sixteen copies of itself, according to last returns. You have got to be the harmonious blacksmith now;

get into your apron, get under your spreading chestnut-tree, and produce."

In Bond Street he met Lord Billy Tottenham, a fellow Oxonian, who met his death in a mud-hole in Flanders the other year.

Lord Billy, with a boyish, smug, but immovable face adorned with a tortoiseshell-rimmed eyeglass.

"Hello, Bobby!" said Billy.

"Hello, Billy!" said Bobby.

"What's wrong with you?" asked Billy.

"Broke to the world, my dear chap."

"What was the horse?" asked Billy.

"'Twasn't a horse—a girl, mostly."

"Well, you're not the first chap that's been broke by a girl," said Billy. "Walk along a bit—but it might have been worse."

"How so?"

"She might have married you."

"Maybe; but the worst of it is I've got to work—tuck up my sleeves and work."

"What at?"

"Novel-writing."

"Well, that's easy enough," said Billy cheerfully. "You can easily get some literary cove to do the writing and stick your name to it, and we'll all buy your books, my boy, we'll all buy your books; not that I ever read books much,

but I'll buy 'em if you write 'em. Come into Jubber's."

Arm-in-arm they entered Long's Hotel, where Billy resided, and over a mutual whisky-and-soda they forgot books and discussed horses; they lunched together and discussed dogs, girls, and mutual friends. It was like old times again, but over the liqueurs and over the cigarette-smoke suddenly appeared to Bobby the vision of Tozer. He said good-bye to the affluent one, and departed. "I've got to work," said Bobby.

His momentary lapse from the direction of the target only served to pull him together, and it seemed, now, as though the luncheon and the lapse had made things easier. He told himself if he hadn't brains enough to scare up some sort of plot for a six-shilling novel he had better drown himself. If he couldn't do what hundreds of people with half his knowledge of the world and ability were doing he would be a mug of the very first water.

If anything depressed him it was the horrible and futile assurance of Billy that "his friends would buy his books." He went to Pactolus Mansions and ordered his luggage to be sent to the Albany, then he changed his sovereign and bought a cigar, then an omnibus gave him an

inspiration. He would get on top of an omnibus and in that cool and airy position do a bit of thinking.

It was not an original idea; he had read, or heard, of a famous author who thought out his plots on the tops of omnibuses—but it was an idea. He clambered on to the top of an eastward-going bus, and, behind a fat lady with bugles on her bonnet, tried to compose his mind.

Why not make a story about—Billy? People liked reading of the aristocracy, and Billy was a character in his way and had many stories attached to him. He could start the book grandly, simply out of remembered visions of Lord William Tottenham in his gayest moods. L. W. T. emptying bottles of cliquot into a grand piano at Oxford. Oxford—ay, grander and grander—the book should begin at Oxford with a fresh and vigorous picture of University life. Tozer would come in, and a host of others; then, after Oxford, there was the rub.

The story that had begun so brightly suddenly ceased.

A character and a situation do not make a story.

They had reached the Bank—as if by derision, when he told himself this. He got off the omnibus and got on a westward-bound one hark-

ing back to the land he knew. He remembered the expression, "racking one's brains to find a plot." He knew the meaning of it now.

At Piccadilly Circus, where all the things meet, a lanky, wild-looking, red-haired girl in a picture hat and a fit of abstraction—that was the impression she gave—caught his eye. In a moment he was after her.

Here was salvation. Julia Delyse, the last catch-on, whose books were selling by the hundred thousand. He had met her at the Three Arts Ball and once since. She had called him Bobby the second time. He had flirted with her, as he flirted with everything with skirts on, and forgotten her. She was very modern; modern enough to raise the hair on a grandmother's scalp. Her looks were to match.

"Hello," said he.

"Hello, Bobby," said Julia.

"You are just the person I want to see," said Bobby.

"How's that?" said Julia.

"I'm in a fix."

"What sort of fix?"

"I've got to write a novel."

"What's the hurry?" asked Julia.

"Money," said Bobby.

"Make money?"

"Yes."

"If you write for money you're lost," said Julia.

"I'm lost anyway," replied Bobby. "Where are you going to?"

"Home; my flat's close by. Come and have some tea."

"I don't mind. Well now, see here; I've got to do it and I can't find anything to write about."

"With all London before you?"

"I know, but when I start to think it all gets behind me. I want you to start me with some idea; you're full of ideas and you know the ropes."

They had reached the flat, and the lady with ideas ushered him in.

The sitting-room was in a scheme of black with Japanese effects; she offered cigarettes, lit one herself, and tea was brought in.

Then the hypnotism began.

The fact that she was a "famous authoress" would not have mattered a button to Bobby yesterday; to-day, on his new strange road, it lent her a charm that completed the fascination of her wondrous eyes. They seemed wild in the street, but when she looked at one intensively they were wonderful. Plots were forgotten, and

in the twilight Bobby's full, musical voice might have been heard discussing literature—with long pauses.

"Dear old thing. . . . Is that cushion comfy? . . . Oh, bother the girl and the tea-things! . . . Just put your head so—so. . . ."

He had been hooked twenty times by girls and pulled off the hook by parents or been thrown back by the fisherwoman on inspecting his bank balance, but he had never been hooked like this before, for Julia had no parents to speak of; she was above bank balances, and her grip was of iron where passion was concerned, and publishers. Her publishers could have told you that by the way she gripped her rights when they tried to cheat her of them, for, despite her wondrous eyes and wild air and the fact that she was a genius, she was practical as well as tenacious in hold.

Then, at the end of the *séance,* Bobby found himself leaving the flat a semi-tied-up man. He couldn't remember whether he had proposed to her or she to him, or whether either of them had proposed or actually accepted, but there was a tie between them, a tie slight enough and not binding in any court; less an engagement than an attachment formed, so he told himself.

He remembered in the street, however, that a

tie between him and an authoress was not what Tozer wanted; he had received no plot or even literary hint. Had he retained his clear senses during the *séance,* and had he possessed a knowledge of Julia Delyse's brilliant and cynical books, he might have wondered where the brilliancy and cynicism came from. In love, Julia was absolutely unliterary—and a bit heavy—clinging, as it were.

The momentary idea of running back to ask for the forgotten plot, as for a hat left behind, was dispelled by this sudden feeling that she was heavy.

Under the fascination of her eyes and in that weird room she seemed light; in St. James's Street, where he now was, she seemed heavy. And he would have to go on with the attachment for awhile or be a brute. That recognition, with the remembrance of Tozer and a recognition of his failure in his search for the one essential thing, depressed him for a moment. Then he determined to forget about everything and go and have dinner. In other words, failing in his search for the thing he wanted, he stopped searching, leaving the matter in the hands of blind chance.

CHAPTER II

UNCLE SIMON

OR fate, if you like it better, for it was fated that Bobby should find that day the thing he was in search of.

He dined at a little club he patronised in a street off St. James's Street, met a friend named Foulkes, and adjourned to the Alhambra, Foulkes insisting on doing all the paying.

They left the Alhambra at half-past ten.

"I must be getting back to the Albany," said Bobby. "I'm sharing rooms with a chap, and he's an early bird."

"Oh, let him wait," said Foulkes. "Come along for ten minutes to the Stage Club."

They went to the Stage Club. Then, the place being empty and little amusement to be found there, they departed, Foulkes declaring his determination to see Bobby part of the way home.

Passing a large entrance hall blazing with light and filled with the noise of a distant band, Foulkes stopped.

"Come in here for a moment," said he. In they went.

The place was gay—very gay. Little marble-topped tables stood about; French waiters running from table to table and serving guests—ladies and gentlemen.

At a long glittering bar many men were standing, and a Red Hungarian Band was discoursing scarlet music.

Foulkes took a table and ordered refreshment. The place was horrid. One could not tell exactly what there was about it that went counter to all the finer feelings and the sense of home, simplicity, and happiness.

Bobby, rather depressed, felt this, but Foulkes, a man of tougher fibre, seemed quite happy.

"What ails you, Ravenshaw?" asked Foulkes.

"Nothing," said Bobby. "No, I won't have any more to drink. I've work to do——"

Then he stopped and stared before him with eyes wide.

"What is it now?" asked Foulkes.

"Good Lord!" said Bobby. "Look at that chap at the bar!"

"Which one?"

"The one with the straw hat on the back of

his head. It can't be—but it is—it's the Relative."

"The one you told me of that fired you out and cut you off with a shilling?"

"Yes. Uncle Simon. No, it's not, it can't be. It is, though, in a straw *hat.*"

"And squiffy," said Foulkes.

Bobby got up and, leaving the other, strolled to the bar casually. The man at the bar was toying with a glass of soda-water supplied to him on sufferance. Bobby got close to him. Yes, that was the right hand with the white scar—got when a young man "hunting"—and the seal ring.

The last time Bobby had met Uncle Simon was in the office in Old Serjeants' Inn. Uncle Simon, seated at his desk-table with his back to the big John Tann safe, had been in bitter mood; not angry, but stern. Bobby seated before him, hat in hand, had offered no apologies or exculpations for his conduct with girls, for his stupid engagement, for his idleness. He had many bad faults, but he never denied them, nor did he seek to minimise them by explanations and lies.

"I tried to float you," had said Uncle Simon, as though Bobby were a company. "I have failed. Well, I have done my duty, and I

clearly see that I will not be doing my duty by continuing as I have done; the allowance I have made you is ended. You will now have to swim for yourself. I should never have put money in your hands; I quite see that."

"I can make my own living," said Bobby. "I am not without gratitude for what you have done——"

"And a nice way you have shown your gratitude," said the other, "tangling yourself like that—gaming, frequenting bars."

So the interview had ended. Frequenting bars!

"Uncle Simon!" said Bobby half-nervously, touching the other on the arm.

Uncle Simon swung slowly round. Bobby might have been King Canute for all Uncle Simon knew. He had got beyond the stage where the word "uncle" from a stranger would have aroused ire or surprise.

"H'are you?" said Simon. "Have a drink?"

Yes, it was Uncle Simon right enough, and Bobby, in all his life, had never received such a shock as that which came to him now with the full recognition of the fact. St. Paul's Cathedral turned into a gambling-shop, the Bishop of London dressed as a clown, would have been

nothing to this. He was horrified. He came to the swift conclusion that Uncle Simon had come to smash somehow, and gone mad. A vague idea flew through his mind that his respected relative was dressed like this as a disguise to avoid creditors, but he had sense enough not to ask questions.

"I don't mind," said he; "I'll have a small soda."

"Small grandmother," said the other; then, nodding to the bar-tender, "'Nother same as mine."

"What have you been doing?" asked Bobby vaguely, as he took the glass.

"Roun' the town—roun' the town," replied the other. "Gl'd to meet you. What've you been doin'?"

"Oh, I've just been going round the town."

"Roun' the town, that's the way—roun' the town," replied the other. "Roun' an' roun' and roun' the town."

Foulkes broke into this intellectual discussion.

"I'm off," said Foulkes.

"Stay a minit," said Uncle Simon. "What'll you have?"

"Nothing, thanks," said Foulkes.

"Come on," said Bobby, taking the arm of his relative.

"W'ere to?" asked the other, hanging back slightly.

"Oh, we'll go round the town—round and round. Come on." Then to Foulkes, "Get a taxi, quick!"

Foulkes vanished towards the door.

Then Simon, falling in with the round-the-town idea, arm-in-arm, the pair threaded their way between the tables, the cynosure of all eyes, Simon exhibiting dispositions to stop and chat with seated and absolute strangers, Bobby perspiring and blushing. All the lectures on fast living he had ever endured were nothing to this; the shame of folly, for the first time in his life, appeared definitely before him, and the relief of the street and the waiting taxi beyond words.

They bundled Simon in.

"No. 12, King Charles Street, Westminster," said Bobby to the driver.

Uncle Simon's head and bust appeared at the door of the vehicle, the address given by Bobby seeming to have paralysed the round-the-town idea in his mind.

"Ch'ing Cross Hotel," said he. "Wach you mean givin' wrong address? I'm staying Ch'ing Cross Hotel."

"Well, let's go to Charles Street *first*," agreed Bobby.

"No—Ch'ing Cross Hotel—luggage waitin' there."

Bobby paused.

Could it be possible that this was the truth? It couldn't be stranger than the truth before him.

"All right," said he. "Charing Cross Hotel, driver."

He said good-bye to Foulkes, got in, and shut the door.

Uncle Simon seemed asleep.

The Charing Cross Hotel was only a very short distance away, and when they got there Bobby, leaving the sleeping one undisturbed, hopped out to make enquiries as to whether a Mr. Pettigrew was staying there; if not, he could go on to Charles Street.

In the hall he found the night porter and Mudd.

"Good heavens! Mr. Robert, what are you doing here?" said Mudd.

Bobby took Mudd aside.

"What's the matter with my uncle, Mudd?" asked Bobby in a tragic half-whisper.

"Matter!" said Mudd, wildly alarmed. "What's he been a-doing of?"

"I've got him in a cab outside," said Bobby.

"Oh, thank God!" said Mudd. "He's not hurt, is he?"

"No; only three sheets in the wind."

Mudd broke away for the door, followed by the other.

Simon was still asleep.

They got him out, and between them they brought him in, Bobby paying the fare with the last of his sovereign.

Arrived at the room, Mudd turned on the electric light, and then, between them, they got the reveller to bed. Folding his coat, Mudd, searching in the pockets, found a brass door-knocker. "Good Lord!" murmured Mudd. "He's been a-takin' of knockers."

He hid the knocker in a drawer and proceeded. Two pounds ten was all the money to be found in the clothes, but Simon had retained his watch and chain by a miracle.

Bobby was astonished at Simon's pyjamas, taken out of a drawer by Mudd; blue and yellow striped silk, no less.

"He'll be all right now, and I'll have another look at him," said Mudd. "Come down, Mr. Robert."

"Mudd," said Bobby, when they were in the hall again, "what is it?"

"He's gone," said Mudd; "gone in the head."

"Mad?"

"No, not mad; it's a temporary abrogation. Some of them new diseases, the doctor says. It's his youth come back on him, grown like a wisdom tooth. Yesterday he was as right as you or me; this morning he started off for the office as right as myself. It must have struck him sudden. Same thing happened last year and he got over it. It took a month, though."

"Good heavens!" said Bobby. "I met him in a bar, by chance. If he's going on like this for a month you'll have your work cut out for you, Mudd."

"There's no name to it," said Mudd. "Mr. Robert, this has to be kept close in the family and away from the office; you've got to help with him."

"I'll do my best," said Bobby unenthusiastically, "but, hang it, Mudd, I've got my living to make now. I've no time to hang about bars and places, and if to-night's a sample——"

"We've got to get him away to the country or somewhere," said Mudd, "else it means ruin to the business and Lord knows what all. It's got to be done, Mr. Robert, and you've got to help, being the only relative."

"Couldn't that doctor man take care of him?"

"Not he," said Mudd; "he's given me in-

structions. The master is just to be let alone in reason; any thwarting or checking might send him clean off. He's got to be led, not driven."

Bobby whistled softly and between his teeth. He couldn't desert Uncle Simon. He never remembered that Uncle Simon had deserted him for just such conduct, or even less, for Bobby, stupid as he was, had rarely descended to the position he had found Uncle Simon in a little while ago.

Bobby was young, generous, forgetful and easy to forgive, so the fact that the Relative had deserted him and cut him off with a shilling never occurred to his open soul at this critical moment.

Uncle Simon had to be looked after. He felt the truth of Mudd's words about the office. If this thing were known it would knock the business to pieces. Bobby was no fool, and he knew something of Simon's responsibilities; he administered estates, he had charge of trust-money, he was the most respected solicitor in London. Heavens! if this were known, what a rabbit-run for frightened clients Old Serjeants' Inn would become within twenty-four hours!

Then, again, Bobby was a Ravenshaw. The Ravenshaws were much above the Pettigrews. The Ravenshaws were a proud race, and the old

Admiral, his father, who lost all his money in Patagonian Bonds, was the proudest of the lot, and he had handed his pride to his son.

Yes, leaving even the office aside, Uncle Simon must be looked after.

Now if U. S. had been a lunatic the task would have been abominable but simple, but a man who had suddenly developed extraordinary youth, yet was, so the doctor said, sane—a man who must be just humoured and led—was a worse proposition.

Playing bear-leader to a young fool was an entirely different thing to being a young fool oneself. Even his experience of an hour ago told Bobby this; that short experience was his first sharp lesson in the disgustingness of folly. He shied at the prospect of going on with the task. But Uncle Simon must be looked after. He couldn't get over or under that fence.

"Well, I'll do what I can," said he. "I'll come round to-morrow morning. But see here, Mudd, where does he get his money from?"

"He's got ten thousand pounds somewhere hid," said Mudd.

"Ten thousand what?"

"Pounds. Ten thousand pounds somewhere hid. The doctor told me he had it. He drew the same last year and spent five in a month."

"Five pounds?"

"Five thousand, Mr. Robert."

"Five thousand in a month! I say, this is serious, Mudd."

"Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!" said Mudd. "Don't tell me—I know—and, me, I've been working forty years for five hundred."

"He couldn't have taken it out with him to-day, do you think?"

"No, Mr. Robert, I don't think he's as far gone as that. He's always been pretty close with his money, and closeness sticks, abrogation or no abrogation; but it's not the money I'm worritin' so much about as the women."

"What women?"

"Them that's always looking out for such as he."

"Well, we must coosh them off," said Bobby.

"You'll be here in the morning, Mr. Robert?"

"Yes, I'll be here, and, meanwhile, keep an eye on him."

"Oh, I'll keep an eye on him," said Mudd.

Then the yawning night porter saw this weird conference close, Mudd going off upstairs and Bobby departing, a soberer and wiser young man even than when he had entered.

It was late when he reached the Albany.

Tozer was sitting up, reading a book on counterpoint.

"Well, what luck?" asked Tozer, pleased at the other's gravity and sobriety.

"I've found a plot," said Bobby; "at least, the middle of one, but it's tipsy."

"Tipsy?"

"It's my—Tozer, this is a dead secret between you and me—it's my Relative."

"Your uncle?"

"Yes."

"What on earth do you mean?"

Bobby explained.

Tozer made some tea over a spirit lamp as he listened, then he handed the other a cup.

"That's interesting," said he, as he sat down again and filled a pipe. "That's interesting."

"But look here," said the other, "do you believe it? Can a man get young again and forget everything and go on like this?"

"I don't know," said Tozer, "but I believe he can—and he seems to be doing it, don't he?"

"He does; we found a knocker in his coat pocket."

"I beg your pardon, a what?"

"A door-knocker; he must have wrung it off a door somewhere, a big brass one, like a lion's head."

"How old is he?"

"Uncle?"

"Yes."

"Sixty."

Tozer calculated.

"Forty years ago—yes, the young chaps about town were still ringing door-knockers then; it was going out, but I had an uncle who did it. This is interesting." Then he exploded. He had never seen Simon the solicitor, or his mirth might have been louder.

"It's very easy to laugh," said Bobby, rather huffed, "but you would not laugh if you were in my shoes—I've got to look after him."

"I beg your pardon," said Tozer. "Now let me be serious. Whatever happens, you have got a fine *ficelle* for a story. I'm in earnest; it only wants working out."

"Oh, good heavens!" said Bobby. "Does one eat one's grandmother? And how am I to write stories tied like this?"

"He'll write it for you," said Tozer, "or I'm greatly mistaken, if you only hang on and give him a chance. He's begun it for you. And as for eating your grandmother, uncles aren't grandmothers, and you can change his name."

"I wish to goodness I could," said Bobby.

"The terror I'm in is lest his name should come out in some mad escapade."

"I expect he's been in the same terror of you," said Tozer, "many a time."

"Yes, but I hadn't an office to look after and a big business."

"Well, you've got one now," said Tozer, "and it will teach you responsibility, Bobby; it will teach you responsibility."

"Hang responsibility!"

"I know; that's what your uncle has often said, no doubt. Responsibility is the only thing that steadies men, and the sense of it is the grandfather of all the other decent senses. You'll be a much better man for this, Bobby, or my name is not Tozer."

"I wish it were Ravenshaw," said Bobby. Then remembrance made him pause.

"I ought to tell you——" said he, then he stopped.

"Well?" said Tozer.

"I promised you to stop—um—fooling after girls."

"That means, I expect, that you have been doing it."

"Not exactly, and yet——"

"Go on."

Bobby explained.

"Well," said Tozer, "I forgive you. It was good intent spoiled by atavism. You returned to your old self for a moment, like your Uncle Simon. Do you know, Bobby, I believe this disease of your uncle's is more prevalent than one would imagine—though of course in a less acute form. We are all of us always returning to our old selves, by fits and starts—and paying for the return. You see what you have done to-day. Your Uncle Simon has done nothing more foolish, you both found your old selves.

"Lord, that old self! All the experience and wisdom of the world don't head it off, it seems to me, when it wants to return. Well, you've done it, and when you write your story you can put yourself in as well as your uncle, and call the whole thing, 'A Horrible Warning.' Good night."

CHAPTER III

THE HUNDRED-POUND NOTE

UNCLE SIMON awoke consumed by thirst, but without a headache; a good constitution and years of regular life had given him a large balance to draw upon.

Mudd was in the room arranging things; he had just drawn up the blind.

"Who's that?" asked Simon.

"Mudd," replied the other.

Mudd's *tout ensemble* as a new sort of hotel servant seemed to please Simon, and he accepted him at once as he accepted everything that pleased him.

"Give me that water-bottle," said Simon.

Mudd gave it. Simon half-drained it and handed it back. The draught seemed to act on him like the elixir vitæ.

"What are you doing with those clothes?" said he.

"Oh, just folding them," said Mudd.

"Well, just leave them alone," replied the other. "Is there any money in the pockets?"

"These aren't what you wore last night," said Mudd; "there was two pounds ten in the pockets of what you had on. Here it is, on the mantel."

"Good," said Simon.

"Have you any more money anywhere about?" asked Mudd.

Now Simon, spendthrift in front of pleasure and heedless of money as the wind, in front of Mudd seemed cautious and a bit suspicious. It was as though his subliminal mind recognised in Mudd restraint and guardianship and common sense.

"Not a halfpenny," said he. "Give me that two pounds ten."

Mudd, alarmed at the vigour of the other, put the money on the little table by the bed.

Simon was at once placated.

"Now put me out some clothes," said he. He seemed to have accepted Mudd now as a personal servant—hired when? Heaven knows when; details like that were nothing to Simon.

Mudd, marvelling and sorrowing, put out a suit of blue serge, a blue tie, a shirt and other things of silk. There was a bathroom, off the bedroom, and, the things put out, Simon arose

and wandered into the bathroom, and Mudd, taking his seat on a chair, listened to him tubbing and splashing—whistling, too, evidently in the gayest spirits, spirits portending another perfect day.

"Lead him," had said Oppenshaw. Why, Mudd already was being led. There was something about Simon, despite his irresponsibility and good humour, that would not brook a halter even if the halter were of silk. Mudd recognised that. And the money! What had become of the money? The locked portmanteau might contain it, but where was the key?

Mudd did not even know whether his unhappy master had recognised him or not, and he dared not ask, fearing complications. But he knew that Simon had accepted him as a servant, and that knowledge had to suffice.

If Simon had refused him, and turned him out, that would have been a tragedy indeed.

Simon, re-entering the bedroom, bath towel in hand, began to dress, Mudd handing things which Simon took as though half oblivious of the presence of the other. He seemed engaged in some happy vein of thought.

Dressed and smart, but unshaved, though scarcely showing the fact, Simon took the two pounds ten and put it in his pocket, then he

looked at Mudd. His expression had changed somewhat; he seemed working out some problem in his mind.

"That will do," said he; "I won't want you any more for a few minutes. I want to arrange things. You can go down and come back in a few minutes."

Mudd hesitated. Then he went.

He heard Simon lock the door. He went into an adjoining corridor and walked up and down, dumbly praying that Mr. Robert would come—confused, agitated, wondering. . . . Suppose Simon wanted to be alone to cut his throat! The horror of this thought was dispelled by the recollection that there were no razors about; also by the remembered cheerfulness of the other. But why did he want to be alone?

Two minutes passed, three, five—then the intrigued one, making for the closed door, turned the handle. The door was unlocked, and Simon, standing in the middle of the room, was himself again.

"I've got a message I want you to take," said Simon.

Ten minutes later Mr. Robert Ravenshaw, entering the Charing Cross Hotel, found Mudd with his hat on, waiting for him.

"Thank the Lord you've come, Mr. Robert!" said Mudd.

"What's the matter now?" asked Bobby. "Where is he?"

"He's having breakfast," said Mudd.

"Well, that's sensible, anyhow. Cheer up, Mudd; why, you look as if you'd swallowed a funeral."

"It's the money," said Mudd. Then he burst out, "He told me to go from the room and come back in a minit. Out I went, and he locked the door. Back I came; there was he standing. 'Mudd,' said he, 'I've got a message for you to take. I want you to take a bunch of flowers to a lady.' Me!"

"Yes?" said Bobby.

"To a lady!"

"'Where's the flowers?' said I, wishing to head him off. 'You're to go and buy them,' said he. 'I have no money,' said I, wishing to head him off. 'Hang money!' said he, and he puts his hand in his pocket and out he brings a hundred-pound note and a ten-pound note. And he had only two pounds ten when I left him. He's got the money in that portmanteau, that I'm sure, and he got me out of the room to get it."

"Evidently," said Bobby.

" ' Here's ten pounds,' said he; ' get the best bunch of flowers money can buy and tell the lady I'm coming to see her later on in the day.'

" ' What lady? ' said I, wishing to head him off.

" ' This is the address,' said he, and goes to the writing-table and writes it out."

He handed Bobby a sheet of the hotel paper. Simon's handwriting was on it, and a name and address supplied by that memory of his which clung so tenaciously to all things pleasant.

" Miss Rossignol, 10, Duke Street, Leicester Square."

Bobby whistled.

" Did I ever dream I'd see this day? " mourned Mudd. " Me! Sent on a message like that, by *him!* "

" This is a complication," said Bobby. " I say, Mudd, he must have been busy yesterday—upon *my* soul—— "

" Question is, what am I to do? " said Mudd. " I'm goin' to take no flowers to hussies."

Bobby thought deeply for a moment.

" Did he recognise you this morning? " he asked.

" I don't know," said Mudd, " but he made no bones. I don't believe he remembered me right, but he made no bones."

"Well, Mudd, you'd better just swallow your feelings and take those flowers, for if you don't, and he finds out, he may fire you. Where would we be then? Besides, he's to be humoured, so the doctor said, didn't he?"

"Shall I send for the doctor right off, sir?" asked Mudd, clutching at a forlorn hope.

"The doctor can't stop him from fooling after girls," said Bobby, "unless the doctor could put him away in a lunatic asylum; and he can't, can he, seeing he says he's not mad? Besides, there's the slur, and the thing would be sure to leak out. No, Mudd, just swallow your feelings and trot off and get those flowers, and, meanwhile, I'll do what I can to divert his mind. And see here, Mudd, you might just see what that girl is like."

"Shall I tell her he's off his head and that maybe she'll have the law on her if she goes on fooling with him?" suggested Mudd.

"No," said the more worldly-wise Bobby; "if she's the wrong sort that would only make her more keen. She'd say to herself, 'Here's a queer old chap with money, half off his nut, and not under restraint; let's make hay before they lock him up.' If she's the right sort it doesn't matter; he's safe, and, right sort or wrong sort, if he found you'd been interfering he might send

you about your business. No, Mudd, there's nothing to be done but get the flowers and leave them, and see the lady if possible, and make notes about her. Say as little as possible."

"He told me to tell her he'd call later in the day."

"Leave that to me," said Bobby. "And now, off with you."

CHAPTER IV

THE HUNDRED-POUND NOTE—*continued*

MUDD departed and Bobby made for the coffee-room.

He entered and looked around. A good many people were breakfasting in the big room, the ordinary English breakfast crowd at a big hotel; family parties, lone men and lone women, some reading letters, some papers, and all, somehow, with an air of divorcement from home.

Simon was there, seated at a little table on the right and enjoying himself. Now, and in his right mind, Simon gave Bobby another shock. Could it be possible that this pleasant-faced, jovial-looking gentleman, so well-dressed and *à la mode,* was Uncle Simon? What an improvement! So it seemed at first glance.

Simon looked up from his sausages—he was having sausages, saw Bobby—and with his unfailing memory of pleasant things, even dimly seen, recognised him as the man of last night.

"Hullo," said Simon, as the other came up to

the table, "there you are again. Had breakfast?"

"No," said Bobby. "I'll sit here if I may." He drew a chair to the second place that was laid and took his seat.

"Have sausages," said Simon. "Nothing beats sausages."

Bobby ordered sausages, though he would have preferred anything else. He didn't want to argue.

"Nothing beats sausages," said Uncle Simon again.

Bobby concurred.

Then the conversation languished, just as it may between two old friends or boon companions who have no need to keep up talk.

"Feeling all right this morning?" ventured Bobby.

"Never felt better in my life," replied the other. "Never felt better in my life. How did you manage to get home?"

"Oh, I got home all right."

Simon scarcely seemed to hear this comforting declaration; scrambled eggs had been placed before him.

Bobby, in sudden contemplation of a month of this business, almost forgot his sausages. The true horror of Uncle Simon appeared to

him now for the first time. You see, he knew all the facts of the case. An ordinary person, unknowing, would have accepted Simon as all right, but it seemed to Bobby, now, that it would have been much better if his companion had been decently and honestly mad, less uncanny. He was obviously sane, though a bit divorced from things; obviously sane, and eating scrambled eggs after sausages with the abandon of a schoolboy on a holiday after a long term at a cheap school; sane, and enjoying himself after a night like that—yet he was Simon Pettigrew.

Then he noticed that Simon's eyes were constantly travelling, despite the scrambled eggs, in a given direction. A pretty young girl was breakfasting with a family party a little way off —that was the direction.

There was a mother, a father, something that looked like an uncle, what appeared to be an aunt, and what appeared to be May dressed in a washing silk blouse and plain skirt.

November was glancing at May.

Bobby remembered Miss Rossignol and felt a bit comforted; then he began to feel uncomfortable: the aunt was looking fixedly at Simon. His admiration had evidently been noted by Watchfulness; then the uncle seemed to take notice.

Bobby, blushing, tried to make conversation, and only got replies. Then, to his relief, the family, having finished breakfast, withdrew, and Simon became himself again, cheerful and burning for the pleasures of the day before him, the pleasures to be got from London, money, and youth.

His conversation told this, and that he desired to include Bobby in the scheme of things, and the young man could not help remembering Thackeray's little story of how, coming up to London, he met a young Oxford man in the railway carriage, a young man half-tipsy with the prospect of a day in town and a "tear round" —with the prospect, nothing more.

"What are you going to do now?" asked Bobby, as the other rose from the table.

"Shaved," said Simon; "come along and get shaved; can't go about like this."

Bobby was already shaved, but he followed the other outside to a barber's and sat reading a *Daily Mirror* and waiting whilst Simon was operated on. The latter, having been shaved, had his hair brushed and trimmed, and all the time during these processes the barber spake in this wise, Simon turning the monologue to a duologue.

"Yes, sir, glorious weather, isn't it? Lon-

don's pretty full, too, for the time of year—fuller than I've seen for a long time. Ever tried face massage, sir? Most comforting. Can be applied by yourself. Can sell you a complete outfit, Parker's face cream and all, two pound ten. Thank you, sir. Staying in the Charing Cross 'Otel? I'll have it sent to your room. Yes, sir, the 'otel is full. There's a deal of money being spent in London, sir. Raise your chin, sir, a leetle more. Ever try a Gillette razor, sir? Useful should you wish to shave in a 'urry; beautiful plated. This is it, sir—one guinea—shines like silver, don't it? Thank you, sir, I'll send it up with the other. Yes, sir, it's most convenient havin' a barber's close to the 'otel. I supply most of the 'otel people with toilet rekisites. 'Air's a little thin on the top, sir; didn't mean no offence, sir, maybe it's the light. Dry, that's what it is; it's the 'ot weather. Now, I'd recommend Coolers' Lotion followed after application by Goulard's Brillantine. Oh, Lord, no, sir! *Them* brillantines is no use. Goulard's is the only real; costs a bit more, but then, cheap brillantine is rewin. Thank you, sir. And how are you off for 'air brushes, sir? There's a pair of bargains in that show-case—travellers' samples—I can let you have, silver-plated, as good as you'll get in London and 'arf

the price. Shine, don't they? And feel the bristles—real 'og. Thank you, sir. Two ten—one one—one four—two ten—and a shillin' for the 'air cut and shave. No, sir, I can't change an 'undred-pound note. A ten? Yes, I can manage a ten. Thank you, sir."

Seven pounds and sixpence for a hair-cut and shave—with accompaniments. Bobby, tongue-tied and aghast, rose up.

"'Air cut, sir?" asked the barber.

"No, thanks," replied Bobby.

Simon, having glanced at himself in the mirror, picked up his straw hat and walking-stick, and taking the arm of his companion, out they walked.

"Where are you going?" asked Bobby.

"Anywhere," replied the other; "I want to get some change."

"Why, you've got change!"

Simon unlinked, and in the face of the Strand and the passers-by produced from his pocket two hundred-pound notes, three or four one-pound notes, and a ten-pound note; searching in his pockets to see what gold he had, he dropped a hundred-pound note, which Bobby quickly recovered.

"Mind!" said Bobby. "You'll have those notes snatched."

"That's all right," said Simon.

He replaced the money in his pocket, and his companion breathed again.

Bobby had borrowed five pounds from Tozer in view of possibilities.

"Look here," said he, "what's the good of staying in London a glorious day like this? Let's go somewhere quiet and enjoy ourselves—Richmond or Greenwich or somewhere. I'll pay expenses and you need not bother about change."

"No, you won't," said Simon. "You're going to have some fun along with me. What's the matter with London?"

Bobby couldn't say.

Renouncing the idea of the country, without any other idea to replace it except to keep his companion walking and away from shops and bars and girls, he let himself be led. They were making back towards Charing Cross. At the *Bureau de Change* Simon went in, the idea of changing a hundred-pound note pursuing him. He wanted elbow-room for enjoyment, but the Bureau refused to make change. The note was all right; perhaps it was Simon that was the doubtful quantity. He had quite a little quarrel over the matter and came out arm-in-arm with his companion and flushed.

"Come along," said Bobby, a new idea striking him. "We'll get change somewhere."

From Charing Cross, through Cockspur Street, then through Pall Mall and up St. James's Street they went, stopping at every likely and unlikely place to find change. Engaged so, Simon at least was not spending money or taking refreshment. They tried at shipping offices, at insurance offices, at gun-shops and tailors, till the weary Bobby began to loathe the business, began to feel that both he and his companion were under suspicion and almost that the business they were on was doubtful.

Simon, however, seemed to pursue it with zest and, now, without anger. It seemed to Bobby as though he enjoyed being refused, as it gave him another chance of entering another shop and showing that he had a hundred-pound note to change—a horrible foolish satisfaction that put a new edge to the affair. Simon was swanking.

"Look here," said the unfortunate, at last, "wasn't there a girl you told me of last night you wanted to send flowers to? Let's go and get them; then we can have a drink somewhere."

"She'll wait," said Simon. "Besides, I've sent them. Come on."

"Very well," said Bobby, in desperation. "I

believe I know a place where you can get your note changed; it's close by."

They reached a cigar merchant's. It was the cigar merchants and moneylenders that had often stood him in good stead. "Wait for me," said Bobby, and he went in. Behind the counter was a gentleman recalling Prince Florizel of Bohemia.

"Good morning, Mr. Ravenshaw," said this individual.

"Good morning, Alvarez," replied Bobby. "I haven't called about that little account I owe you though—but cheer up. I've got you a new customer—he wants a note changed."

"What sort of note?" asked Alvarez.

"A hundred-pound note; can you do it?"

"If the note's all right."

"Lord bless me, yes! I can vouch for that and for him; only he's strange to London. He's got heaps of money, too, but you must promise not to rook him too much over cigars, for he's a relative of mine."

"Where is he?" asked Alvarez.

"Outside."

"Well, bring him in."

Bobby went out. Uncle Simon was gone. Gone as though he had never been, swallowed up in the passing crowd, fascinated away by

heaven knows what, and with all those bank-notes in his pocket. He might have got into a sudden taxi or boarded an omnibus, or vanished up Sackville Street or Albemarle Street; any passing fancy or sudden temptation would have been sufficient.

Bobby, hurrying towards St. James's Street to have a look down it, stopped a policeman.

"Have you seen an old gentleman—I mean a youngish-looking gentleman—in a straw hat?" asked Bobby. "I've lost him." Scarcely waiting for the inevitable reply, he hurried on, feeling that the constable must have thought him mad.

St. James's Street showed nothing of Simon. He was turning back when, half-blind to everything but the object of his search, he almost ran into the arms of Julia Delyse. She was carrying a parcel that looked like a manuscript.

"Why, Bobby, what is the matter with you?" asked Julia.

"I'm looking for someone," said Bobby distractedly. "I've lost a relative of mine."

"I wish it were one of mine," said Julia. "What sort of relative?"

"An oldish man in a straw hat. Walk down a bit; you look that side of the street and I'll

watch this; he *may* have gone into a shop—and I *must* get hold of him."

He walked rapidly on, and Julia, sucked for a moment into this whirlpool of an Uncle Simon that had already engulfed Mudd, Bobby, and the good name of the firm of Pettigrew, toiled beside him till they came nearly to the Park railings.

"He's gone," said Bobby, stopping suddenly dead. "It's no use; he's gone."

"Well, you'll find him again," said Julia hopefully. "Relatives always turn up."

"Oh, he's sure to turn up," said the other, "and that's what I'm dreading—it's the way he'll turn up that's bothering me."

"I could understand you better if I knew what you meant," said Julia. "Let's walk back; this is out of my direction."

They turned.

Despite his perplexity and annoyance, Bobby could not suppress a feeling of relief at having done with the business for a moment; all the same, he was really distressed. The craving for counsel and companionship in thought seized him.

"Julia, can you keep a secret?" asked he.

"Tight," said Julia.

"Well, it's my uncle."

"You've lost?"

"Yes; and he's got his pockets full of hundred-pound bank-notes—and he's no more fit to be trusted with them than a child."

"What a delightful uncle!"

"Don't laugh; it's serious."

"He's not mad, is he?"

"No, that's the worst of it. He's got one of these beastly new diseases—I don't know what it is, but as far as I can make out it's as if he'd got young again without remembering what he is."

"How interesting!"

"Yes, you would find him very interesting if you had anything to do with him; but, seriously, something has to be done. There's the family name and there's his business." He explained the case of Simon as well as he could.

Julia did not seem in the least shocked.

"But I think it's beautiful," she broke out. "Strange—but in a way beautiful and pathetic. Oh, if *only* a few more people could do the same—become young, do foolish things instead of this eternal grind of common sense, hard business, and everything that ruins the world!"

Bobby tried to imagine the world with an increased population of the brand of Uncle Simon, and failed.

"I know," he said, "but it will be the ruin of his business and reputation. Abstractly, I don't deny there's something to be said for it, but in the concrete it don't work. Do think, and let's try to find a way out."

"I'm thinking," said Julia.

Then, after a pause:

"You must get him away from London."

"That was my idea, but he won't go, not even to Richmond for a few hours. He won't leave London."

"There's a place in Wessex I know," said Julia, "where there's a charming little hotel. I was down there for a week in May. You might take him there."

"We'd never get him into the train."

"Take him in a car."

"Might do that," said Bobby. "What's the name of it?"

"Upton-on-Hill; and I'll tell you what, I'll go down with you, if you like, and help to watch him. I'd like to study him."

"I'll think of it," said Bobby hurriedly. The affair of Uncle Simon was taking a new turn; like Fate, it was trying to force him into closer contact with Julia. Craving for someone to help him to think, he had welded himself to Julia with this family secret for solder. The

idea of a little hotel in the country with Julia, ever ready for embracements and passionate scenes, the knowledge that he was almost half-engaged to her, the instinct that she would suck him into cosy corners and arbours—all this frankly frightened him. He was beginning to recognise that Julia was quite light and almost brilliant in the street when love-making was impossible, but impossibly heavy and dull, though mesmeric, when alone with him with her head on his shoulder. And away in the distance of his mind a deformed sort of common sense was telling him that if once Julia got a good long clutch on him she would marry him; he would pass from whirlpool to whirlpool of cosy corner and arbour over the rapids of marriage with Julia clinging to him.

"I'll think of it," said he. "What's its name?"

"The Rose Hotel, Upton-on-Hill—think of Upton Sinclair. It's a jolly little place, and such a nice landlord; we'd have a jolly time, Bobby. Bobby, have you forgotten yesterday?"

"No," said Bobby, from his heart.

"I didn't sleep a wink last night," said the lady of the red hair. "Did you?"

"Scarcely."

"Do you know," said she, "this is almost like

Fate. It gives us a chance to meet under the same roof quite properly since your uncle is there—not that I care a button for the world, but still, there are the proprieties, aren't there?"

"There are."

"Wait for me," said she. "I want to go into my publishers' with this manuscript."

They had reached a fashionable publishers' office that had the appearance of a bank premises. In she went, returning in a moment empty-handed.

"Now I'm free," said she; "free for a month. What are you doing to-day?"

"I'll be looking for Uncle Simon," he replied. "I must rush back to the Charing Cross Hotel, and after that—I must go on hunting. I'll see you to-morrow, Julia."

"Are you staying at the Charing Cross?"

"No, I'm staying at B12, the Albany, with a man called Tozer."

"I wish we could have had the day together. Well, to-morrow, then."

"To-morrow," said Bobby.

He put her into a taxi and she gave the address of a female literary club, then when the taxi had driven away he returned to the Charing Cross Hotel.

There he found Mudd, who had just returned.

CHAPTER V

THE HOME OF THE NIGHTINGALES

MUDD, with the ten-pound note and the written address, had started that morning with the intention of doing another errand as well. He first took a cab to King Charles Street. It was a relief to find it there, and that the house had not been burned down in the night. Fire was one of Mudd's haunting dreads—fire and the fear of a mistress. He had extinguishing-bombs hung in every passage, besides red, cone-shaped extinguishers. If he could have had bombs to put out the flames of love and keep women away he no doubt would have had them.

Mrs. Jukes received him, and he enquired if the plate had been locked up. Then he visited his own room and examined his bank-book to see if it were safe and untampered with; then he had a glass of ginger wine for his stomach's sake.

"Where are you off to now?" asked Mrs. Jukes.

"On business for the master," replied Mudd. "I've some law papers to take to an address. Lord! look at those brasses! Haven't the girls no hands? Place going to rack and ruin if I leave it two instant minits. And look at that fender—sure you put the chain on the hall door last night?"

"Sure."

"Well, be sure you do it, for there's another Jack-the-Ripper chap goin' about the West End, I've heard, and he may be in on you if you don't."

Having frightened Mrs. Jukes into the sense of the necessity for chains as well as bolts, Mudd put on his hat, blew his nose, and departed, banging the door behind him and making sure it was shut.

There is a flower shop in the street at the end of King Charles Street. He entered, bought his bouquet, and with it in his hand left the establishment. He was looking for a cab to hide himself in; he found none, but he met a fellow butler, Judge Ponsonby's man.

"Hello, Mr. Mudd," said the other; "going courting?"

"Mrs. Jukes asked me to take them to a female friend that's goin' to be married," said Mudd.

The bouquet was not extraordinarily large, but it seemed to grow larger.

Condemned to take an omnibus in lieu of a cab, it seemed to fill the omnibus; people looked at it and then at Mudd. It seemed to him that he was condemned to carry Simon's folly bare in the face of the world. Then he remembered what he had said about the recipient going to be married. Was that an omen?

Mudd believed in omens. If his elbow itched —and it had itched yesterday—he was going to sleep in a strange bed; he never killed spiders, and he tested " strangers " in the tea-cup to see if they were male or female.

The omen was riding him now, and he got out of the omnibus and sought the street of his destination, feeling almost as though he were a fantastic bridesmaid at some nightmare wedding, with Simon in the rôle of groom.

That Simon should select a wife in this gloomy street off Leicester Square, and in this drab-looking house at whose door he was knocking, did not occur to Mudd. What did occur to him was that some hussy living in this house had put her spell on Simon and might select him for a husband, marry him at a registrar office before his temporary youth had departed, and come and reign at Charles Street.

Mudd's dreaded imaginary mistress had always figured in his mind's eye as a stout lady—eminently a lady—who would interfere with his ideas of how the brasses ought to be polished, interfere with tradesmen, order Mudd about, and make herself generally a nuisance; this new imaginary horror was a "painted slut," who would bring ridicule and disgrace on Simon and all belonging to him.

Mudd had the fine feelings of an old maid on matters like this, backed by a fine knowledge of what elderly men are capable of in the way of folly with women.

Did not Mr. Justice Thurlow marry his cook?

He rang at the dingy hall door and it was opened by a dingy little girl in a print dress.

"Does Miss Rosinol live here?" asked Mudd.

"Yus."

"Can I see her?"

"Wait a minit," said the dingy one. She clattered up the stairs; she seemed to wear hobnailed boots to judge by the noise. A minute elapsed, and then she clattered down again.

"Come in, plaaze," said the little girl.

Mudd obeyed and followed upstairs, holding on to the shaky banister with his left hand,

carrying the bouquet in his right, feeling as though he were a vicious man walking upstairs in a dream; feeling no longer like Mudd.

The little girl opened a door, and there was the "painted hussy"—old Madame Rossignol sitting at a table with books spread open before her and writing.

She translated—as before said—English books into French, novels mostly.

The bouquet of last night had been broken up; there were flowers in vases and about the room; despite its shabbiness, there was an atmosphere of cleanliness and high decency that soothed the stricken soul of Mudd.

"I'm Mr. Pettigrew's man," said Mudd, "and he asked me to bring you these flowers."

"Ah, Monsieur Seemon Pattigrew," cried the old lady, her face lighting. "Come in, monsieur. Cerise!—Cerise!—a gentilmon from Mr. Pattigrew. Will you not take a seat, monsieur?"

Mudd, handing over the flowers, sat down, and at that moment in came Cerise from the bedroom adjoining. Cerise, fresh and dainty, with wide blue eyes that took in Mudd and the flowers, that seemed to take in at the same time the whole of spring and summer.

"Poor, but decent," said Mudd to himself.

" Monsieur," said the old lady, as Cerise ran off to get a bowl to put the flowers in, " you are as welcome to us as your good kind master who saved my daughter yesterday. Will you convey to him our deepest respects and our thanks? "

" Saved her? " said Mudd.

Madame explained. Cerise, arranging the flowers, joined in; they waxed enthusiastic. Never had Mudd been so chattered to before. He saw the whole business and guessed how the land lay now. He felt deeply relieved. Madame inspired him with instinctive confidence; Cerise in her youth and innocence repelled any idea of marriage between herself and Simon. But they'd got to be warned, somehow, that Simon was off the spot. He began the warning seated there before the women and rubbing his knees gently, his eyes wandering about as though seeking inspiration from the furniture.

Mr. Pettigrew was a very good master, but he had to be took care of; his health wasn't what it might be. He was older than he looked, but lately he had had an illness that had made him suddenly grow young again, as you might say; the doctors could not make it out, but he was just like a child sometimes, as you might say.

" I said it," cut in Madame. " A boy—that is his charm."

Well, Mudd did not know anything about charms, but he was often very anxious about Mr. Pettigrew. Then, little by little, the confidence the women inspired opened his floodgates and his suppressed emotions came out.

London was not good for Mr. Pettigrew's health—that was the truth; he ought to be got away quiet and out of excitement—doorknockers rose up before him as he said this—but he was very self-willed. It was strange a gentleman getting young again like this, and a great perplexity and trouble to an old man like him, Mudd.

"Ah, monsieur, he has been always young," said Madame; "that heart could never grow old."

Mudd shook his head.

"I've known him for forty year," said he, "and it has hit me cruel hard, his doing things he's never done before—not much; but there you are—he's different."

"I have known an old gentleman," said Madame—"Monsieur de Mirabole—he, too, changed to be quite gay and young, as though spring had come to him. He wrote me verses," laughed Madame. "Me, an old woman! I humoured him, did I not, Cerise? But I never read his verses; I could not humour him to that point."

"What happened to him?" asked Mudd gloomily.

"Oh dear, he fell in love with Cerise," said Madame. "He was very rich; he wanted to marry Cerise, did he not, Cerise?"

"Oui, maman," replied Cerise, finishing the flowers.

All this hit Mudd pleasantly. Sincere as sunshine, patently, obviously, truthful, this pair of females were beyond suspicion on the charge of setting nets for Simon. Also, and for the first time in his life, he came to know the comfort of a female mind when in trouble. His troubles up to this had been mostly about uncleaned brasses, corked wine, letters forgotten to be posted. In this whirlpool of amazement, like Poe's man in the descent of the maelstrom, who, clinging to a barrel, found that he was being sucked down slower, Mudd, clinging now to the female saving-something—sense, clarity of outlook, goodness, call it what you will—found comfort.

He had opened his mind, the nightmare had lifted somewhat. Opening his mind to Bobby had not relieved him in the least; on the contrary, talking with Bobby, the situation had seemed more insane than ever. The two rigid masculine minds had followed one another, incapable of mutual help; the buoyant female

Something incapable of strict definition was now to Mudd as the supporting barrel. He clutched at the idea of old Monsieur de Mirabole, who had got young again without coming to much mischief; he felt that Simon in falling upon these two females had fallen amongst pillows. He told them of Simon's message, that he would call upon them later in the day, and they laughed.

"He will be safe with us," said Madame; "we will not let him come to 'arm. Do not be alarmed, Monsieur Modd, the bon Dieu will surely protect an innocent so charming, so good—so much goodness may walk alone, even amongst tigers, even amongst lions; it will come to no 'arm. We will see that he returns to the Sharing Cross 'Otel—I will talk to 'im."

Mudd departed, relieved, so great is the power of goodness, even though it shines in the persons of an impoverished old French lady and a girl whose innocence is her only strength.

But his relief was not to be of long duration, for on entering the hotel, as before said, he met Bobby. "He's gone," said Bobby; "given me the slip; and he has two hundred-pound bank-notes with him, to say nothing of the rest."

"Oh, Lord!" said Mudd.

"Can he have gone to see that girl? What's her address?"

"What girl?" asked Mudd.

"The girl you took the flowers to."

"I've just been," said Mudd. "No, he wasn't there. Wish he was; it's an old lady."

"Old lady!"

"And her daughter. They're French folk, poor but honest, not a scrap of harm in them." He explained the Rossignol affair.

"Well, there's nothing to be done but sit down and wait," said Bobby.

"It's easy to say that. Me, with my nerves near gone."

"I know; mine are nearly as bad. 'Pon my soul, it's just as if one had lost a child. Mudd, we've got to get him out of London; we've got to do it."

"Get him back first," said Mudd. "Get him back alive with all that money in his pocket. He'll be murdered before night, that's my opinion, I know London; or gaoled—and he'll give his right name."

"We'll tip the reporters if he is," said Bobby, "and keep it out of the papers. I was run in once and I know the ropes. Cheer up, Mudd, and go and have a whisky-and-soda; you want bucking up, and so do I."

"Bucking up!" said Mudd.

CHAPTER VI

THE FLIGHT OF THE DRAGON-FLY

ONE of the pleasantest, yet perhaps most dangerous, points about Simon Pettigrew's condition was his un-English open-heartedness towards strangers—strangers that pleased him. A disposition, in fact, to chum up with anything that appealed to him, without question, without thought. Affable strangers, pretty girls—it was all the same to Simon.

Now, when Bobby Ravenshaw went into the cigar merchant's, leaving Simon outside, he had not noticed particularly a large Dragon-Fly car, claret-coloured and adorned with a tiny monogram on the door-panel, which was standing in front of the shop immediately on the right. It was the property of the Hon. Dick Pugeot, and just as Bobby disappeared into the tobacconist's the Hon. Dick appeared from the doorstep of the next-door shop.

Dick Pugeot, late of the Guards, was a big, yellow man, quite young, perhaps not more

than twenty-five, yet with a serious and fatherly face and an air that gave him another five years of apparent age. This serious and fatherly appearance was deceptive. With the activity of a gnat, a disregard of all consequences, a big fortune, a good heart, and a taste for fun of any sort as long as it kept him moving, Dick Pugeot was generally in trouble of some kind or another. His crave for speed on the road was only equal to his instinct for fastness in other respects, but, up to this, thanks to luck and his own personality, he had, with the exception of a few endorsed licences and other trifles of that sort, always escaped.'

But once he had come very near to a real disaster. Some eighteen months ago he found himself involved with a lady, a female shark in the guise of an angel, a—to put it in his own language—" bad 'un."

The bad 'un had him firmly hooked. She was a Countess, too! and fried and eaten he undoubtedly would have been had not the wisdom of an uncle saved him.

" Go to my solicitor, Pettigrew," said the uncle. " If she were an ordinary card-sharper I would advise you to go to Marcus Abraham, but, seeing what she is, Pettigrew is the man. He wouldn't take up an ordinary case of this

sort, but, seeing what she is, and considering that you are my nephew, he'll do it—and he knows all the ins and outs of her family. There's nothing he doesn't know about us."

"Us" meaning people of high degree.

Pugeot went, and Simon took up the case, and in forty-eight hours the fish was off the hook, frantically grateful. He presented Simon with a silver wine-cooler and then forgot him, till this moment, when, coming out of Spud and Simpson's shop, he saw Simon standing on the pavement smoking a cigar and watching the pageant of the street.

Simon's new clothes and holiday air and straw hat put him off for a moment, but it was Pettigrew right enough.

"Hello, Pettigrew!" said Pugeot.

"Hello," said Simon, pleased with the heartiness and appearance of this new friend.

"Why, you look quite gay," said Pugeot. "What are you up to?"

"Out for some fun," said Simon. "What are you up to?"

"Same as you," replied Pugeot, delighted, amused, and surprised at Simon's manner and reply, the vast respect he had for his astuteness greatly amplified by this evidence of mundane leanings. "Get into the car; I've got to call

at Panton Street for a moment, and then we'll go and have luncheon or something."

He opened the car door and Simon hopped in; then he gave the address to the driver and the car drove off.

"Well, I never expected to see you this morning," said Pugeot. "Never can feel grateful enough to you either—you've nothing special to do, have you? Anywhere I can drive you to?"

"I've got to see a girl," said Simon, "but she can wait."

Pugeot laughed.

That explained the summer garb and straw hat, but the frankness came to him with the weest bit of a shock. However, he was used to shocks, and if old Simon Pettigrew was running after girls it was no affair of his. It was a good joke, though, despite the fact that he could never tell it. Pugeot was not the man to tell tales out of school.

"Look here," said Simon, suddenly producing his notes, "I want to change a hundred; been trying to do it in a lot of shops. You can't have any fun without some money."

"Don't you worry," said Pugeot. "This is my show."

"I want to change a hundred," said Simon,

with the persistency of Toddy wanting to see the wheels go round.

"Well, I'll get you change, though you don't really want it. Why, you've got two hundred there—and a tenner!"

"It's not too much to have a good time with."

"Oh my!" said Pugeot. "Well, if you're on the razzle-dazzle, I'm with you, Pettigrew. I feel safe with you, in a way; there's not much you don't know."

"Not much," said Simon, puffing himself.

The car stopped.

"A minute," said Pugeot. Out he jumped, transacted his business, and was back again under five minutes. There was a new light in his sober eye.

"Let's go and have a slap at the Wilderness," said he, lowering his voice a tone. "You know the Wilderness. I can get you in—jolly good fun."

"Right," said Simon.

Pugeot gave an address to the driver and off they went. They stopped in a narrow street and Pugeot led the way into a house.

In the hall of this house he had an interview with a pale-faced individual in black, an evil, weary-looking person who handed Simon a

visitors' book to sign. They then went into a bar, where Simon imbibed a cocktail, and from the bar they went upstairs.

Pugeot opened a door and disclosed Monte Carlo.

A Monte Carlo shrunk to one room and one table. This was the Wilderness Club, and around the table were grouped men of all ages and sizes, some of them of the highest social standing.

The stakes were high.

Just as a child gobbles a stolen apple, so these gentlemen seemed to be trying to make as much out of their furtive business as they could and get away, winners or losers, as soon as possible lest worse befel them. Added to the uneasiness of the gambler was the uneasiness of the law-breaker, the two uneasinesses combined making a mental cocktail that, to a large number of the frequenters, had a charm far above anything to be obtained in a legitimate gambling-shop on the Continent.

This place supplied Oppenshaw with some of his male patients.

Pugeot played and lost, and then Simon plunged.

They were there an hour, and in that hour Simon won seven hundred pounds!

Then Pugeot, far more delighted than he, dragged him away.

It was now nearly one o'clock, and downstairs they had luncheon, of a sort, and a bottle of cliquot, of a sort.

"You came in with two hundred and you are going out with nine," said Pugeot. "I am so jolly glad—you *have* the luck. When we've finished we'll go for a great tearing spin and get the air. You'd better get a cap somewhere; that straw hat will be blown to Jericho. You've never seen Randall drive? He beats me. We'll run round to my rooms and get coats—the old car is a Dragon-Fly. I want to show you what a Dragon-Fly can really do on the hard high-road out of sight of traffic. Two Benedictines, please."

They stopped at Scott's, where Simon invested in a cap; then they went to Pugeot's rooms, where overcoats were obtained. Then they started.

Pugeot was nicknamed the Baby—Baby Pugeot—and the name sometimes applied. Mixed with his passion for life, he loved fresh air and a good many innocent things, speed amongst them. Randall, the chauffeur, seemed on all fours with him in the latter respect, and the Dragon-Fly was an able instrument. Clear-

ing London, they made through Sussex for the sea. The day was perfect and filled for miles with the hum of the Dragon-Fly. At times they were doing a good seventy miles, at times less; then came the Downs and a vision of the sea—seacoast towns through which they passed picking up petrol and liquid refreshments. At Hastings, or somewhere, where they indulged in a light and early dinner, the vision of Cerise, always like a guardian angel, arose before the remains of the mind of Simon, and her address. He wanted to go there at once, which was manifestly impossible. He tried to explain her to Pugeot, who at the same time was trying to explain a dark-eyed girl he had met at a dance the week before last and who was haunting him. "Can't get her blessed eyes out of my head, my dear chap; and she's engaged two deep to a chap in the Carabineers, without a cent to his name and a pile of debts as big as Mount Ararat. She won't be happy—that's what's gettin' me; she won't be happy. How can she be happy with a chap like that, without a cent to his name and a pile of debts? Lord, *I* can't understand women, they're beyond me. Waiter, *con*found you! do you call this stuff asparagus? Take it away! Not a cent to her name—and tied to him for years, maybe. I mean to say, it's

absurd. . . . What were you saying? Oh yes, I'll take you there—it's only round the corner, so to speak. Randall will do it. The Dragon-Fly'll have us there in no time. Do you remember, was this Hastings or Bognor? Waiter, hi! Is this Hastings or Bognor? All your towns are so confoundedly alike there's no telling which is which, and I've been through twenty. Hastings, that'll do; put your information down in the bill—if you can find room for it. You needn't be a bit alarmed, old chap, she'll be there all right. You said you sent her those flowers? Well, that will keep her all right and happy. I mean to say, she'll be right—*ab*-solutely—I know women from hoof to mane. No, no pudding. Bill, please."

Then they were out in the warm summer twilight listening to a band. Then they were getting into the car, and Pugeot was saying to Simon:

"It's a jolly good thing we've got a teetotum driver. What *you* say, old chap?"

Then the warm and purring night took them and sprinkled stars over them, and a great moon rose behind, which annoyed Pugeot, who kept looking back at it, abusing it because the reflection from the wind-screen got in his eyes. Then they burst a tyre and Pugeot, instantly

becoming condensedly clever and active and clear of speech, insisted on putting on the spare wheel himself. He had a long argument with Randall as to which was the front and which was the back of the wheel—not the sideways front and back, but the foreways front and back, Randall insisting gently that it did not matter. Then the wheel on and all the nuts re-tested by Randall—an operation which Pugeot took as a sort of personal insult; the jack was taken down, and Pugeot threw it into a ditch. They would not want it again as they had not another spare wheel, and it was a nuisance anyhow, but Randall, with the good humour and patience which came to him from a salary equal to the salary of a country curate, free quarters and big tips and perquisites, recovered the jack and they started.

A town and an inn that absolutely refused to serve the smiling motorists with anything stronger than "minerals" was passed. Then ten miles further on the lights of a town hull down on the horizon brought the dry "insides" to a clear consideration of the position.

The town developing an inn, Randall was sent, as the dove from the ark, with a half-sovereign, and returned with a stone demijohn and two glasses. It was beer.

CHAPTER VII

NINE HUNDRED POUNDS

BOBBY RAVENSHAW did not spend the day at the Charing Cross Hotel waiting for Simon; he amused himself otherwise, leaving Mudd to do the waiting.

At eleven o'clock he called at the hotel. Mr. Mudd was upstairs in Mr. Pettigrew's room, and he would be called down.

Bobby thought that he could trace a lot of things in the porter's tone and manner, a respect and commiseration for Mr. Mudd and perhaps not quite such a high respect for himself and Simon. He fancied that the hotel was beginning to have its eye upon him and Simon as questionable parties of the *bon vivant* type—a fancy that may have been baseless, but was still there.

Then Mudd appeared.

"Well, Mudd," said Bobby, "hasn't he turned up yet?"

"No, Mr. Robert."

"Where on earth can he be?"

"I'm givin' him till half-past eleven," said Mudd, "and then I'm off to Vine Street."

"What on earth for?"

"To have the hospitals circulated to ask about him."

"Oh, nonsense!"

"It's on my mind he's had an accident," said Mudd. "Robbed and stunned, or drugged with opium and left in the street. I know London—and him as he is! He'll be found with his pockets inside out—I know London. You should have got him down to the country to-day, Mr. Robert, somewhere quiet; now, maybe, it's too late."

"It's very easy to say that. I tried to, and he wouldn't go, not even to Richmond. London seems to hold him like a charm; he's like a bee in a bottle—can't escape."

At this moment a horrid little girl in a big hat and feathers, boots too large for her, and a shawl, made her appearance at the entrance door, saw the hall porter and came towards him. She had a letter in her hand.

The hall porter took the letter, looked at it, and brought it to Mudd.

Mudd glanced at the envelope and tore it open.

" 10, Duke Street,
" Leicester Square

" Mr. Modd,
" Come at once.
"Celestine Rossignol."

That was all, written in an angular, old-fashioned hand and in purple ink.

" Where's my hat? " cried Mudd, running about like a decapitated fowl. " Where's my hat? Oh ay, it's upstairs! " He vanished, and in a minute reappeared with his hat; then, with Bobby, and followed by the dirty little girl trotting behind them, off they started.

They tried to question the little girl on the way, but she knew nothing definite.

The gentleman had been brought 'ome—didn't know what was wrong with him; the lady had given her the letter to take; that was all she knew.

" He's alive, anyway," said Bobby.

" The Lord knows! " said Mudd.

The little girl let them in with a key and, Mudd leading the way, up the stairs they went.

Mudd knocked at the door of the sitting-room.

Madame and Cerise were there, quite calm,

and evidently waiting; of Simon there was not a trace.

"Oh, Mr. Modd," cried the old lady, "how fortunate you have received my letter! Poor Monsieur Pattigrew——"

"He ain't dead?" cried Mudd.

No, Simon was not dead. She told. Poor Monsieur Pattigrew and a very big gentleman had arrived over an hour ago. Mr. Pattigrew could not stand; he had been taken ill, the big gentleman had declared. Such a nice gentleman, who had sat down and cried whilst Mr. Pattigrew had been placed on the sofa—taken ill in the street. The big gentleman had gone for a doctor, but had not yet returned. Mr. Pattigrew had been put to bed. She and the big gentleman had seen to that.

Mr. Pattigrew had recovered consciousness for a moment during this operation and had produced a number of bank-notes—such a number! She had placed them safely in her desk; that was one of the reasons she had sent so urgently for Mr. Modd.

She produced the notes—a huge sheaf.

Mudd took them and examined them dazedly, hundreds and hundreds of pounds' worth of notes; and he had only started with two hundred pounds!

"Why, there's nearly a thousand pounds' worth here," said Mudd.

Bobby's astonishment might have been greater had not his eyes rested, from the first moment of their coming in, on Cerise. Cerise with parted lips, a heightened colour, and the air of a little child at a play she did not quite understand.

She was lovely. French, innocent, lovely as a flower—a new thing in London, he had never seen anything quite like her before. The poverty of the room, Uncle Simon, his worries and troubles, all were banished or eased. She was music, and if Saul could have seen her he would have had no need for David.

Had Uncle Simon added burglary to knocker-snatching, broken into a jeweller's and disposed of his takings to a "fence," committed robbery? All these thoughts strayed over his mind, harmless because of Cerise.

The unfortunate young man, who had fooled so long with girls, had met the girl who had been waiting for him since the beginning of the world. There is always that; she may be blowsy, she may be plain, or lovely like Cerise—she is Fate.

"And here is the big gentleman's card," said Madame, taking a visiting card from her desk, then another and another.

"He gave me three."

Mudd handed the card to Bobby, who read:

"THE HON. RICHARD PUGEOT,
"PALL MALL PLACE, ST. JAMES.

"GUARDS' CLUB."

"I know him," said Bobby. "*That's* all right, and Uncle Simon couldn't have fallen into better hands."

"Is, then, Monsieur Pattigrew your oncle?" asked the old lady.

"He is, Madame."

"Then you are thrice welcome here, monsieur," said she.

Cerise looked the words, and Bobby's eyes as they met hers returned thanks.

"Come," said Madame, "you shall see him and that he is safe."

She gently opened the door leading to the bedroom, and there, in a little bed, dainty and white—Cerise's little bed—lay Uncle Simon, flushed and smiling and snoring.

"Poor Monsieur Pattigrew!" murmured the old lady.

Then they withdrew.

It seemed that there was another bed to be got in the house for Cerise, and Mudd, taking

charge of the patient, the ladies withdrew. It was agreed that no doctor was wanted. It was also agreed between Bobby and Mudd that the hotel was impossible after this.

"We must get him away to the country tomorrow," said Mudd, "if he'll go."

"He'll go, if I have to take him tied up and bound," said Bobby. "My nerves won't stand another day of this. Take care of those notes, Mudd, and don't let him see them. They'll be useful getting him away. I'll be round as early as I can. I'll see Pugeot and get the rights of the matter from him. Good night."

Off he went.

In the street he paused for a moment, then he took a passing taxi for the Albany.

Tozer was in, playing patience and smoking. He did not interrupt his game for the other.

"Well, how's Uncle Simon?" asked Tozer.

"He's asleep at last after a most rampageous day."

"You look pretty sober."

"Don't mention it," said Bobby, going to a tantalus case and helping himself to some whisky. "My nerves are all unstrung."

"Trailing after him?"

"Thank God, no!" said Bobby. "Waiting for him to turn up dead, bruised, battered, or

simply intoxicated and stripped of his money. He gave me the slip in Piccadilly with two hundred-pound notes in his pocket. The next place I find him was half an hour ago in a young lady's bed, dead to the world, smiling, and with nearly a thousand pounds in bank-notes he'd hived somehow during the day."

"A thousand pounds!"

"Yes, and he'd only started with two hundred."

"I say," said Tozer, forgetting his cards, "what a chap he must have been when he *was* young!"

"When he *was* young! Lord, I don't want to see him any younger than he is; if this is youth, give me old age."

"You'll get it fast enough," said Tozer, "don't you worry; and this will be a reminder to you to keep old. There's an Arab proverb that says, 'There are two things colder than ice, an old young man and a young old man.'"

"Colder than ice!" said Bobby. "I wish you had five minutes with Uncle Simon."

"But who was this lady—this young——"

"Two of the nicest people on earth," said Bobby, "an old lady and her daughter—French. He saved the girl in an omnibus accident or something in one of his escapades, and

took her home to her mother. Then to-night he must have remembered them, and got a friend to take him there. Fancy, the cheek! What made him, in his state, able to remember them?"

"What is the young lady like?"

"She's beautiful," said Bobby; then he took a sip of whisky-and-soda and failed to meet Tozer's eye as he put down the glass.

"That's what made him remember her," said Tozer.

Bobby laughed.

"It's no laughing matter," said the other, "at his age—when the heart is young."

Bobby laughed again.

"Bobby," said Tozer, "beware of that girl."

"I'm not thinking of the girl," said Bobby; "I'm thinking how on earth the old man——"

"The youth, you mean."

"Got all that money."

"You're a liar," said Tozer; "you are thinking of the girl."

CHAPTER VIII

PALL MALL PLACE

"HIGGS!" cried the Hon. Richard Pugeot.

"Sir?" answered a voice from behind the silk curtains cutting off the dressing and bathroom from the bedroom.

"What o'clock is it?"

"Just gone eight, sir."

"Get me some soda-water."

"Yes, sir."

The Hon. Richard lay still.

Higgs, a clean-shaven and smart-looking young man, appeared with a bottle of Schweppes and a tumbler on a salver.

The cork popped and the sufferer drank.

"What o'clock did I come home?"

"After twelve, sir—pretty nigh one."

"Was there anyone with me?"

"No, sir."

"No old gentleman?"

"No, sir."

"Was Randall there?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the car?"

"Yes, sir."

"There was no old gentleman in the car?"

"No, sir."

"Good heavens!" said Pugeot. "What can I have done with him?"

Higgs, not knowing, said nothing, moving about putting things in order and getting his master's bath ready.

"I've lost an old gentleman, Higgs," said Pugeot, for Higgs was a confidential servant as well as a valet.

"Indeed, sir," said Higgs, as though losing old gentlemen was as common as losing umbrellas.

"And the whole business is so funny I can scarcely believe it's true. I haven't a touch of the jim-jams, have I, Higgs?"

"Lord, sir, no! You're all right."

"Am I? See here, Higgs. Yesterday morning I met old Mr. Simon Pettigrew, the lawyer; mind, you are to say nothing about this to anyone—but stay a moment, go into the sitting-room and fetch me *Who's Who.*"

Higgs fetched the book.

"'Pettigrew, Simon,'" read out Pugeot,

with the book resting on his knees, " ' Justice of the Peace for Herts—President of the United Law Society—Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries ' — h'm, h'm — ' Club, Athenæum.' Well, I met the old gentleman in Piccadilly. We went for a spin together, and the last thing I remember was seeing him chasing a stableman round some inn yard, where we had stopped for petrol or whisky or something; chasing him round with a bucket. He was trying to put the bucket over the stableman's head."

" Fresh," said Higgs.

" As you say, fresh—but I want to know, was that an optical illusion? There were other things, too. If it wasn't an optical illusion I want to know what has become of the old gentleman? I'm nervous—for he did me a good turn once, and I hope to heaven I haven't let him in for any bother."

" Well, sir," said Higgs, " I wouldn't worry, not if I were you. It was only his little lark, and most likely he's home safe by this."

" I have also a recollection of two ladies that got mixed up in the affair," went on the other, " but who they were I can't say. Little lark! The bother of it is, Higgs, one can't play little larks like that, safely, if one is a highly respectable person and a J.P. and

a member of the what's-its-name society."

He got up and tubbed and dressed, greatly troubled in his mind. People sucked into the Simon-whirl were generally troubled in their minds, so great is the Power of High Respectability when linked to the follies of youth.

At breakfast Mr. Robert Ravenshaw's card was presented by Higgs.

"Show him in," said Pugeot.

"Hullo, Ravenshaw!" said Pugeot. "Glad to see you. Have you had breakfast?"

"Yes, thanks. I only called for a moment to see you about my uncle."

"Which uncle?"

"Pettigrew——"

"Good heavens! You don't say he's——" Bobby explained.

It was like a millstone removed from Pugeot's neck.

Then he, in his turn, explained.

Then Bobby went into details.

Then they consulted.

"You can't get him out of London without telling him where you are taking him to," said Pugeot. "He'll kick the car over on the road if he's anything like what he was last night. Leave it to me and *I'll* do the trick. But the question is, where shall we take him? There's

no use going to a place like Brighton; too many attractions for him. A moated grange is what he wants, and even then he'll be tumbling into the moat."

"I know of a place," said Bobby, "down at Upton-on-Hill. A girl told me of it; it's the Rose Hotel."

"I know it," said Pugeot; "couldn't be better. I have a cousin there living at a place called The Nook. There's a bowling-green at the hotel and a golf-course near. Can't hurt himself. Leave it all to me."

He told Higgs to telephone for the car, and then they sat and smoked whilst Pugeot showed Bobby just the way to deal with people of Uncle Simon's description.

"It's all nonsense, that doctor man's talk," said Pugeot. "The poor old chap has shed a nut or two. I ought to know something about it for I've had the same bother in my family. Got his youth back—pish! Cracked, that's the real name for it. I've seen it. I've seen my own uncle, when he was seventy, get his youth back—and the last time I saw him he was pulling a toy elephant along with a string. He'd got a taste also for playing with matches. Is that the car, Higgs? Well, come along, and let's try the power of a little gentle persuasion."

Simon was finishing breakfast when they arrived, assisted by Madame and Cerise. Poor Monsieur Pattigrew did not seem in the least in the need of pity either, though the women hung about him as women hang about an invalid. He was talking and laughing, and he greeted the newcomers as good companions who had just turned up. His geniality was not to be denied, and it struck Bobby, in a weird sort of manner, that Uncle Simon like this was a much pleasanter person than the old original article. Like this: that is to say, for a moment out of danger from the vicious grinding wheels of a city that destroys butterflies and a society that requests respectable old solicitors to remain respectable old solicitors.

Then, the women having discreetly retired for a while, Pugeot began his gentle persuasion.

Uncle Simon, with visions of yesterday's rural pleasures in his mind, required no persuasion, and he would come for a run into the country with pleasure; but Pugeot was not taking that sort of thing on any more. He was gay, but a very little of that sort of gaiety sufficed him for a long time.

"I don't mean that," said he; "I mean let's go down and stay for a while quietly at some nice place—I mean you and Ravenshaw

here—for business will oblige me to come back to town."

"No, thanks," said Simon; "I'm quite happy in London."

"But think how nice it will be in the country this weather," said Bobby. "London's so hot."

"I like it hot," said Simon; "weather can't be too hot for me."

Then the gentle persuaders alternately began offering inducements—bowls, golf, a jolly bar at an hotel they knew, even girls.

They might just as well have been offering buns to the lions of Trafalgar Square.

Then Bobby had an idea, and, leaving the room, he had a conference on the stairs with Madame Rossignol; with Cerise also.

Then leaving Simon to the women for a while, they went for a walk, and returned to find the marble wax.

Simon did not mind a few days in the country if the ladies would come as his guests; he was enthusiastic on the subject now. They would all go and have a jolly time in the country. The old poetical instinct that had not shown itself up to this, restrained, no doubt, by the mesmerism of London, seemed to be awakening and promising new developments.

Bobby did not care; poetry or a Pickford's

van were all the same to him as long as they got Simon out of London.

He had promised Julia Delyse, if you remember, to see her that day, but he had quite forgotten her for the moment.

CHAPTER IX

JULIA

SHE hadn't forgotten him.

Julia, with her hair down, in an eau-de-Nile morning wrapper, and frying bacon over a Duplex oilstove, was not lovely—though, indeed, few of us are lovely in the early morning. She had started the flat before she was famous. It was a bachelor girl's flat, where the bachelor girl was supposed to do her own cooking as far as breakfast and tea were concerned. Money coming in, Julia had re-furnished the flat and requisitioned the part-time service of a maid.

Like the doctors of Harley Street who share houses, she shared the services of the maid with another flat-dweller, the maid coming to Julia after three o'clock to tidy up and to bring in afternoon tea and admit callers. She was quite well enough off to have employed a whole maid, but she was careful—her publishers could have told you that.

The bacon fried and breakfast over and

cleared away, Julia, with her hair still down, set to work at the cleared table before a pile of papers and account-books.

Never could you have imagined her the Julia of the other evening discoursing "literature" with Bobby.

She employed no literary agent, being that rare thing, a writer with an instinct for business. When you see vast publishing houses and opulent publishers rolling in their motor-cars you behold an optical illusion. What you see, or, rather, what you ought to see, is a host of writers without the instinct for business.

Julia, seated before her papers and turning them over in search of a letter, came just now upon the first letter she had ever received from a publisher, a very curt, business-like communication saying that the publisher thought he saw his way to the publishing of her MS. entitled "The World at the Gate," and requesting an interview. With it was tied, as a sort of curiosity, the agreement that had been put before her to sign and which she had not signed.

It gave—or would have given—the publisher the copyright and half the American, serial, dramatic and other rights. It offered ten per cent. on the published price of all copies sold *after* the first five hundred copies; it stipulated

that she should give him the next four novels on the same terms as an inducement to advertise the book properly—and it had drawn from Julia the prompt reply, " Send the typescript of my novel back *at once.*"

So ended the first lesson.

Then, heartened by this evidently good opinion of her work, she had gone to another publisher? Not a bit—or at least, not at first. She had joined the Society of Authors—an act as necessary to the making of a successful author as baptism to the making of a Christian. She had studied the publishing tribe, its ways and its works, discovered that they had no more love for books than greengrocers for potatoes, and that such a love, should it exist, would be unhealthy. For no seller of commodities ought to love the commodities he sells.

Then she had gone to a great impudently-advertising roaring trading-firm that dealt with books as men deal with goods in bulk, and, interviewing the manager as man to man, had driven her bargain, and a good one, too.

These people published poets and men of letters—but they respected Julia.

Free of creative work this morning, she could give her full attention to accounts and so forth.

Then she turned to a little book which she sometimes scribbled in, and the contents of which she had a vague idea of some time publishing under a pseudonym. It was entitled "Never," and it was not poetry. It was a thumb-book for authors, made up of paragraphs, some long, some short.

"Never dine with a publisher—luncheon is even worse."

"Never give free copies of books to friends, or lend them. The given book is not valued, the lent book is always lost—besides, the booksellers and lending libraries are your real friends."

"Never lower your price."

"Never attempt to raise your public."

"Never argue with a critic."

"Never be elated with good reviews, or depressed by bad reviews, or enraged by base reviews. The Public is your reviewer—*It* knows," and so on.

She shut up "Never," having included:

"Never give a plot away." Then she did her hair and thought of Bobby.

He had not fixed what hour he would call; that was a clause in the agreement she had forgotten—she, who was so careful about agreements, too.

Then she dressed and sat down to read "De Maupassant" and smoke a cigarette.

She had luncheon in the restaurant below stairs and then returned to the flat. Tea-time came and no Bobby.

She felt piqued, put on her hat, and as the mountain would not come to Mohammed, Mohammed determined to go to the mountain.

Her memory held his address, "care of Tozer, B12, the Albany."

She walked to the Albany, arriving there a little after five o'clock, found B12, and climbed the stairs.

Tozer was in, and he opened the door himself.

"Is Mr. Ravenshaw at home?" asked Julia.

"No," said Tozer; "he's away, gone to the country."

"Gone to the country?"

"Yes; he went to-day."

Tozer had at once spotted Julia as the Lady of the Plot. He was as unconventional as she, and he wanted further acquaintance with this fascinator of his *protégé*.

"I think we are almost mutual acquaintances," said he; "won't you come in? My name is Tozer and Ravenshaw is my best friend.

I'd like to talk to you about him. Won't you come in?"

"Certainly," said the other. "My name is Delyse—I daresay you know it."

"I know it well," said Tozer.

"I don't mean by my books," said Julia, taking her seat in the comfortable sitting-room, "but from Mr. Ravenshaw."

"From both," said Tozer, "and what I want to see is Ravenshaw's name as well known as yours some day. Bobby has been a spendthrift with his time, and he has lots of cleverness."

"Lots," said Julia.

Tozer, who had a keen eye for character, had passed Julia as a sensible person—he had never seen her in one of her love-fits—and she was a lady. Just the person to look after Bobby.

"He has gone down to the country to-day with an old gentleman, his uncle."

"I know all about *him,*" said Julia.

"Bobby has told you, then?"

"Yes."

"About the attack of youth?"

"Yes."

"Well, a whole family party of them went off in a motor-car to-day. Bobby called here for his luggage and I went into Vigo Street and saw them off."

"How do you mean—a family party?"

"The youthful old gentleman and a big blonde man, and Bobby, and an old lady and a pretty girl."

Julia swallowed slightly.

"Relations?"

"No, French, I think, the ladies were. Quite nice people, I believe, though poor. The old gentleman had picked them up in some of his wanderings."

"Bob—Mr. Ravenshaw promised to see me to-day," said Julia. "We are engaged—I speak quite frankly—at least, as good as engaged, you can understand."

"Quite."

"He ought to have let me know," said she broodingly.

"He ought."

"Have they gone to Upton-on-Hill, do you know?"

"They have. The Rose Hotel."

Julia thought for awhile. Then she got up to go.

"If you want my opinion," said Tozer, "I think the whole lot want looking after. They seemed quite a pleasant party, but responsibility seemed somewhat absent; the old lady, charming though she was, seemed to me

scarcely enough ballast for so much youth."

"I understand," said Julia. Then she went off and Tozer lit a pipe.

The pretty young French girl was troubling him. She had charmed even him—and he knew Bobby, and his wisdom indicated that a penniless beauty was not the first rung of the ladder to success in life.

Julia, on the other hand, was solid. So he thought.

PART IV

CHAPTER I

THE GARDEN-PARTY

UPTON-ON-HILL stands on a hog-back of land running north and south, timbered with pines mostly, and commanding a view of half Wessex, not the Wessex of Thomas Hardy, however. You can see seven church spires from Upton, and the Roman road takes it in its sweep, becomes the Upton High Street for a moment, and passes on to be the Roman road again leading to the Downs and the distant sea.

It is a restful place, and in spring the shouting of the birds and the measured call of the cuckoo fills the village, mixing with the voice of the ever-talking pine-trees. In summer Upton sleeps amongst roses in an atmosphere of sunlight and drowsiness, sung to by the bees and the birds. The Rose Hotel stands, set back from the High Street, in its own grounds, and beside the Rose there are two other houses for refreshment, the Bricklayer's Arms and the Saracen's Head, of which more hereafter.

It is a pleasant place as well as a restful. Passing through it, people say, "Oh, what a dream!"; living in it one is driven at last to admit there are dreams and dreams. It is not the place that forces this conviction but the people.

Just as the Roman road narrows at the beginning of the High Street, so the life of a stranger coming, say, from London, narrows at the beginning of his or her residence in Upton. If you are a villager you find yourself under a microscope with three hundred eyes at the eyepiece; if you are a genteel person, but without introductions, you find yourself the target of half a score of telescopes levelled at you by the residents.

Colonel Salmon—who owned the fishing rights of the trout-stream below hill—the Talbot-Tomsons, the Griffith-Smiths, the Grosvenor-Jones and the rest, all these, failing introductions, you will find to be passive resisters to your presence.

Now, caution towards strangers and snobbishness are two different things. The Uptonians are snobbish because, though you may be as beautiful as a dream or as innocent as a saint, you will be sniffed at and turned over; but if you are wealthy it is another matter, as in the case

of the Smyth-Smyths, who were neither beautiful nor innocent—but that is another story.

"The village is a mile further on," said Pugeot; "let's turn down here before we go to the hotel and have afternoon tea with my cousin. Randall, steer for The Nook."

The car was not the Dragon-Fly, but a huge closed limousine, with Mudd seated beside Randall, and inside, the rest of that social menagerie about to be landed on the residents of Upton upon the landing-stage of the social position of Dick Pugeot's cousin, Sir Squire Simpson.

All the introductions in the world could not be better than the personal introduction to *the* Resident of Upton by the Hon. Richard Pugeot.

They passed lodge gates and then up a pleasant drive to a big house-front, before which a small garden-party seemed to be going on; a big afternoon tea it was, and there were men in flannels, and girls in summer frocks, and discarded tennis racquets lying about, and the sight of all this gave Bobby a horrible turn.

Uncle Simon had been very quiet during the journey—happy but quiet—squeezed between the two women, but this was not the sort of place he wanted to land Uncle Simon in despite his

quietude and happiness. Mudd evidently also had qualms, for he kept looking back through the glass front of the car and seemed trying to catch Bobby's eye.

But there was no turning back.

The car swept along the drive, past the party on the lawn, and drew up at the front door. Then, as they bundled out, a tall old man, without a hat and dressed in grey tweed, detached himself from the lawn crowd and came towards them.

This was Sir Squire Simpson, Bart. His head was dome-shaped, and he had heavy eyelids that reminded one of half-closed shutters, and a face that seemed carved from old ivory—an extremely serious-looking person and a stately; but he was glad to see Pugeot, and he advanced with a hand outstretched and the ghost of an old-fashioned sort of smile.

"I've brought some friends down to stay at the hotel," said Pugeot, "and I thought we would drop in here for tea first. Didn't expect to find a party going on."

"Delighted," said the Squire.

He was introduced to "My friend, Mr. Pettigrew, Madame—er—de Rossignol, Mademoiselle de Rossignol, Mr. Ravenshaw."

Then the party moving towards the lawn,

they were all introduced to Lady Simpson, a harmless-looking individual who welcomed them and broke them up amongst her guests and gave them tea.

Bobby, detaching himself for a moment from the charms of Miss Squire Simpson, managed to get hold of Pugeot.

"I say," said he, "don't you think this may be a bit too much for uncle?"

"Oh, he's all right," said Pugeot; "can't come to any harm here. Look at him, he's quite happy."

Simon seemed happy enough, talking to a dowager-looking woman and drinking his tea; but Bobby was not happy. It all seemed wrong, somehow, and he abused Pugeot in his heart. Pugeot had said himself a moated grange was the proper place for Uncle Simon, and even then he might tumble into the moat—and now, with the splendid inconsequence of his nature, he had tumbled him into this whirl of local society. This was not seclusion in the country. Why, some of these people might, by chance, be Uncle Simon's clients!

But there was no use in troubling, and he could do nothing but watch and hope. He noticed that the women-folk had evidently taken up with Cerise and her mother, and he could not

but wonder vaguely how it would have been if they could have seen the rooms in Duke Street, Leicester Square, and the picture of Uncle Simon tucked up and snoring in Cerise's little bed.

The tennis began again, and Bobby, firmly pinned by Miss Squire Simpson—she was a plain girl—had to sit watching a game and trying to talk.

The fact that Madame and Cerise were foreigners had evidently condoned their want of that touch in dress which makes for style. They were being led about and shown things by their hostess.

Uncle Simon had vanished towards the rose-garden at the back of the house, in company with a female; she seemed elderly. Bobby hoped for the best.

"Are you down here for long?" asked Miss Squire Simpson.

"Not very long, I think," replied he. "We may be here a month or so—it all depends on my uncle's health."

"That gentleman you came with?"

"Yes."

"He seems awfully jolly."

"Yes—but he suffers from insomnia."

"Then he'll get lots of sleep here," said she.

"Oh, do tell me the name of that pretty girl who came with you! I never can catch a name when I am introduced to a person."

"A Miss Rossignol—she's a friend of uncle's—she's French."

"And the dear old lady is her mother, I suppose?"

"Yes. She writes books."

"An authoress?"

"Yes—at least, I believe she translates books. She is awfully clever."

"Well played!" cried Miss Squire Simpson, breaking from the subject into an ecstasy at a stroke made by one of the flannelled fools—then resuming:

"She *must* be clever. And are you all staying here together?"

"Yes, at the Rose Hotel."

"You will find it a dear little place," said she, unconscious of any *double entendre,* "and you will get lots of tennis down here. Do you fish?"

"A little."

"Then you must make up to Colonel Salmon—that's him at the nets—he owns the best trout-stream about here."

Bobby looked at Colonel Salmon, a stout, red-faced man with a head that resembled some-

what the head of a salmon—a salmon with a high sense of its own importance.

Then Pugeot came along smoking a cigarette, and then some of the people began to go. The big limousine reappeared from the back premises with Mudd and the luggage, and Pugeot began to collect his party. Simon reappeared with the elderly lady; they were both smiling and he had evidently done no harm. It would have been better, perhaps, if he had, right at the start. The French ladies were recaptured, and as they bundled into the car quite a bevy of residents surrounded the door, bidding them good-bye for the present.

"Remember, you must come and see my roses," said Mrs. Fisher-Fisher. "Don't bother about formality, just drop in, all of you."

"You'll find Anderson stopping at the hotel; he's quite a nice fellow," cried Sir Squire Simpson. "So long—so long!"

"Are they not charming?" said old Madame Rossignol, whose face was slightly flushed with the good time she had been having; "and the beautiful house—and the beautiful garden."

She had not seen a garden for years; verily, Simon *was* a good fairy as far as the Rossignols were concerned.

They drew up at the Rose Hotel. A vast

clambering vine of wisteria shadowed the hall door, and out came the landlord to meet them. Pugeot had telegraphed for rooms; he knew Pugeot, and his reception of them spoke of the fact.

Then the Rossignols were shown to their room, where their poor luggage, such as it was, had been carried before them.

It was a big bedroom, with chintz hangings and a floor with hills and valleys in it; it had black oak beams and the window opened on the garden.

The old lady sat down.

"How happy I am!" said she. "Does it not seem like a dream, *ma fée?*"

"It is like heaven," said Cerise, kissing her.

CHAPTER II

HORN

"NO, sir," said Mudd, "he don't take scarcely anything in the bar of the hotel, but he was sitting last night till closing-time in the Bricklayer's Arms."

"Oh, that's where he was," said Bobby. "How did you find out?"

"Well, sir," said Mudd, "I was in there myself in the parlour, having a drop of hot water and gin with a bit of lemon in it. It's a decent house, and the servants' room in this hotel don't please me, nor Mr. Anderson's man. I was sitting there smoking my pipe when in he came to the bar outside. I heard his voice. Down he sits and talks quite friendly with the folk there and orders a pint of beer all round. Quite affable and friendly."

"Well, there's no harm in that," said Bobby. "I've often done the same in a country inn. Did he stick to beer?"

"He did," said Mudd grimly. "He'd got that ten-pound note I was fool enough to let him

have. Yes, he stuck to beer, and so did the chaps he was treating."

"The funny thing is," said Bobby, "that though he knows we have his money—and, begad, there's nearly eleven thousand of it—he doesn't kick at our taking it—he must have known we cut open that portmanteau—but comes to you for money like a schoolboy."

"That's what he is," said Mudd. "It's my belief, Mr. Robert, that he's getting younger and younger; he's artful as a child after sweets. And he knows we're looking after him, I believe, and he doesn't mind, for it's part of his amusement to give us the slip. Well, as I was saying, there he sat talking away and all these village chaps listening to him as if he was the Sultan of Turkey laying down the law. That's what pleased him. He likes being the middle of everything; and as the beer went down the talk went up—till he was telling them he'd been at the battle of Waterloo."

"Good Lord!"

"*They* didn't know no different," said Mudd, "but it made me crawl to listen to him."

"The bother is," said Bobby, "that we are dealing, not only with a young man, but with the sort of young man who was young forty years ago. That's our trouble, Mudd; we can't

calculate on what he'll do because we haven't the data. And another bother is that his foolishness seems to have increased by being bottled so long, like old beer, but he can't come to harm with the villagers, they're an innocent lot."

"Are they?" said Mudd. "One of the chaps he was talking to was a gallows-looking chap. Horn's his name, and a poacher he is, I believe. Then there's the blacksmith and a squint-eyed chap that calls himself a butcher; the pair of *them* aren't up to much. Innocent lot! Why, if you had the stories Mr. Anderson's man has told me about this village the hair would rise on your head. Why, London's a girl-school to these country villages, if all's true one hears. No, Mr. Robert, he wants looking after here more than anywhere, and it seems to me the only person who has any real hold on him is the young lady."

"Miss Rossignol?"

"Yes, Mr. Robert, he's gone on her in his foolish way, and she can twist him round her finger like a child. When he's with her he's a different person, out of sight of her he's another man."

"Look here, Mudd," said the other, "he can't be in love with her, for there's not a girl he sees he doesn't cast his eye after."

" Maybe," said Mudd, " but when he's with her he's in love with her; I've been watching him and I know. He worships her, I believe, and if she wasn't so sensible I'd be afeard of it. It's a blessing he came across her; she's the only hold on him, and a good hold she is."

" It is a blessing," said Bobby. Then, after a pause, " Mudd, you've always been a good friend of mine, and this business has made me know what you really are. I'm bothered about something—I'm in love with her myself. There, you have it."

" With Miss Rossignol? "

" Yes."

" Well, you might choose worse," said Mudd.

" But that's not all," said Bobby. " There's another girl—Mudd, I've been a damn fool."

" We've all been fools in our time," said Mudd.

" I know, but it's jolly unpleasant when one's follies come home to roost on one. She's a nice girl enough, Miss Delyse, but I don't care for her. Yet somehow I've got mixed up with her —not exactly engaged, but very near it. It all happened in a moment, and she's coming down here; I had a letter from her this morning."

" Oh, Lord! " said Mudd, " another mixture. As if there wasn't enough of us in the business! "

"That's a good name for it, 'business.' I feel as if I was helping to run a sort of beastly factory, a mad sort of show where we're trying to condense folly and make it consume its own smoke—an illicit whisky-still, for we're trying to hide our business all the time, and it gives me the jim-jams to think that at any moment a client may turn up and see him like that. I feel sometimes, Mudd, as fellows must feel when they have the police after them."

"Don't talk of the police," said Mudd, "the very word gives me the shivers. When is she coming, Mr. Robert?"

"Miss Delyse? She's coming by the 3.15 train to-day to Farnborough station, and I've got to meet her. I've just booked her a room here. You see how I am tied. If I was here alone she couldn't come, because it wouldn't be proper, but having *him* here makes it proper."

"Have you told her the state he's in?"

"Yes. She doesn't mind; she said she wished everyone else was the same—she said it was beautiful."

They were talking in Bobby's room, which overlooked the garden of the hotel, and glancing out of the window now, he saw Cerise.

Then he detached himself from Mudd. He reached her as she was passing through the little

rambler-roofed alley that leads from the garden to the bowling-green. There is an arbour in the garden tucked away in a corner, and there is an arbour close to the bowling-green; there are several other arbours, for the hotel-planner was an expert in his work, but these are the only two arbours that have to do with our story.

Bobby caught up with the girl before she had reached the green, and they walked together towards it, chatting as young people only can chat with life and gaiety about nothing. They were astonishingly well-matched in mind. Minds have colours just like eyes; there are black minds and brown minds and muddy-coloured minds and grey minds, and blue minds. Bobby's was a blue mind, though, indeed, it sometimes almost seemed green. Cerise's was blue, a happy blue like the blue of her eyes.

They had been two and a half days now in pretty close propinquity, and had got to know each other well despite Uncle Simon, or rather, perhaps, because of him. They discussed him freely and without reserve, and they were discussing him now, as the following extraordinary conversation will show.

"He's good, as you say," said Bobby, "but he's more trouble to me than a child."

Said Cerise: "Shall I tell you a little secret?"

"Yes."

"You will promise me surely, most surely, you will never tell my little secret?"

"I swear."

"He is in loff with me—I thought it was maman, but it is me." A ripple of laughter that caught the echo of the bowling-alley followed this confession.

"Last night he said to me before dinner, 'Cerise, I loff you.'"

"And what did you say?"

"Then the dinner-gong rang," said Cerise, "and I said, 'Oh, Monsieur Pattigrew, I must run and change my dress.' Then I ran off. I did not want to change my dress, but I did want to change the conversation," finished Cerise.

Then with a smile, "He loffs me more than any of the other girls."

"Why, how do you know he loves other girls?"

"I have seen him look at girls," said Cerise. "He likes all the world, but girls he likes most."

"Are you in love with him, Cerise?" asked Bobby, with a grin.

"Yes," said Cerise candidly. "Who could help?"

"How much are you in love with him, Cerise?"

"I would walk to London for him without my shoes," said Cerise.

"Well, that's something," said Bobby. "Come into this little arbour, Cerise, and let's sit down. You don't mind my smoking?"

"Not one bit."

"It's good to have anyone love one like that," said he, lighting a cigarette.

"He draws it from me," said Cerise.

"Well, I must say he's more likeable as he is than as he was; you should have seen him before he got young, Cerise."

"He was always good," said she, as though speaking from sure knowledge; "always good and kind and sweet."

"He managed to hide it," said Bobby.

"Ah yes—maybe so—there are many old gentlemen who seem rough and not nice, and then underneath it is different."

"How would you like to marry uncle?" asked he, laughing.

"If he were young outside as he is young inside of him—why, then I do not know. I might—I might not."

Then the unfortunate young man, forgetting all things, even the approaching Julia, let his voice fall half a tone; he wandered from Uncle

Simon into the question of the beauty of the roses.

The conversation flagged a bit, then he was holding one of her fingers.

Then came steps on the gravel. A servant.

"The fly is ready to take you to the station, sir."

It was three o'clock.

CHAPTER III

JULIA—*continued*

IT was a cross between a hansom cab and a "growler," with the voice of the latter, and the dust of the Farnborough road, with the prospect of a three-mile drive to meet Julia and a three-mile drive back again, did not fill Bobby with joy—also the prospect of having to make explanations.

He had quite determined on that. After the arbour business it was impossible to go on with Julia; he had to break whatever bonds there existed between them, and he had to do the business before she got to the hotel. Then came the prospect of having to live with her in the hotel, even for a night. He questioned himself, asking himself were he a cad or not, had he trifled with Julia? As far as memory went, they had both trifled with one another. It was a sudden affair, and no actual promise had been made; he had not even said "I love you" —but he had kissed her. The legal mind would, no doubt, have construed that into a declaration

of affection, but Bobby's mind was not legal—anything but—and as for kissing a girl, if he had been condemned to marry all the girls he had kissed he would have been forced to live in Utah.

He had to wait half an hour for the train at Farnborough, and when it drew up out stepped Julia, hot, and dressed in green, dragging a hold-all and a bundle of magazines and newspapers.

"H'are you?" said Bobby, as they shook hands.

"Hot," said Julia.

"Isn't it?"

He carried the hold-all to the fly and a porter followed with a basket-work portmanteau. When the luggage was stowed in they got in and the fly moved off.

Julia was not in a passionate mood; no person is or ever has been after a journey on the London and Wessex and South Coast Railway—unless it is a mood of passion against the railway. She seemed, indeed, disgruntled and critical, and a tone of complaint in her voice cheered up Bobby.

"I know it's an awful old fly," said he, "but it's the best they had; the hotel motor-car is broken down or something."

"Why didn't you wire me that day," said she, "that you were going off so soon? I only got your wire from here next morning. You promised to meet me and you never turned up. I went to the Albany to see if you were in, and I saw Mr. Tozer. He said you had gone off with half a dozen people in a car——"

"Only four, not including me," cut in Bobby.

"Two ladies——"

"An old French lady and her daughter."

"Well, that's two ladies, isn't it?"

"I suppose so—you can't make it three. Then there was uncle; it's true he's a host in himself."

"How's he going on?"

"Splendidly."

"I'm very anxious to see him," said Julia. "It's so seldom one meets anyone really original in this life; most people are copies of others, and generally bad ones at that."

"That's so," said Bobby.

"How's the novel going on?" said Julia.

"Heavens!" said Bobby, "do you think I can add literary work to my other distractions? The novel is not going on, but the plot is."

"How d'you mean?"

"Uncle Simon. I've got the beginning and

middle of a novel in him, but I haven't got the end."

"You are going to put him in a book?"

"I wish to goodness I could, and close the covers on him. No, I'm going to weave him into a story—he's doing most of the weaving, but that's a detail. Look here, Julia——"

"Yes?"

"I've been thinking."

"Yes?"

"I've been thinking we have made a mistake."

"Who?"

"Well, we. I didn't write, I thought I'd wait till I saw you."

"How d'you mean?" said Julia dryly.

"Us."

"Yes?"

"Well, you know what I mean. It's just this way, people do foolish things on the spur of the moment."

"What have we done foolish?"

"We haven't done anything foolish, only I think we were in too great a hurry."

"How?"

"Oh, you know, that evening at your flat."

"Oh!"

"Yes."

"You mean to say you don't care for me any more?"

"Oh, it's not that; I care for you very much."

"Say it at once," said Julia. "You care for me as a sister."

"Well, that's about it," said Bobby.

Julia was silent, and only the voice of the fly filled the air.

Then she said:

"It's just as well to know where one is."

"Are you angry?"

"Not a bit."

He glanced at her.

"Not a bit. You have met someone else. Why not say so?"

"I have," said Bobby. "You know quite well, Julia, one can't help these things."

"I don't know anything about 'these things,' as you call them; I only know that you have ceased to care for me—let that suffice."

She was very calm, and a feeling came to Bobby that she did not care so very deeply for him. It was not a pleasant feeling somehow, although it gave him relief. He had expected her to weep or fly out in a temper, but she was quite calm and ordinary; he almost felt like making love to her again to see if she *had* cared

for him, but fortunately this feeling passed.

"We'll be friends," said he.

"Absolutely," said Julia. "How could a little thing like that spoil friendship?"

Was she jesting with him or in earnest? Bitter, or just herself?

"Is she staying at the hotel?" asked she, after a moment's silence.

"She is," said Bobby.

"It's the French girl?"

"How did you guess that?"

"I knew."

"When?"

"When you explained them and began with the old lady. But the old lady will, no doubt, have her turn next, and to the next girl you'll explain them, beginning with the girl."

Bobby felt very hot and uncomfortable.

"Now you're angry with me," said he.

"Not a bit."

"Well, let's be friends."

"Absolutely. I could never fancy you as the enemy of anyone but yourself."

Bobby wasn't enjoying the drive, and there was a mile more of it—uphill, mostly.

"I think I'll get out and give the poor old horse a chance," said he; "these hills are beastly for it."

He got out and walked by the fly, glancing occasionally at the silhouette of Julia, who seemed ruminating matters.

He was beginning to feel, now, that he had done her an injury, and she had said nothing about going back to-morrow or anything like that, and he was held as by a vice, and Cerise and he would be under the microscope, and Cerise knew nothing about Julia.

Then he got into the fly again and five minutes later they drove up to the Rose. Simon was standing in the porch as they drove up; his straw hat was on the back of his head and he had a cigar in his mouth.

He looked at Bobby and Julia and grinned slightly. It seemed suddenly to have got into his head that Bobby had been fetching a sweetheart as well as a young lady from the station. It had, in fact, and things that got into Simon's youthful head in this fashion, allied to things pleasant, were difficult to remove.

CHAPTER IV

HORN—*continued*

SIMON had been that day all alone to see Mrs. Fisher-Fisher's roses; he said so at dinner that night. He had remembered the general invitation and had taken it, evidently, as a personal one. Bobby did not enquire details; besides, his mind was occupied at that dinner-table, where Cerise was constantly seeking his glance and where Julia sat watching. Brooding and watching and talking chiefly to Simon.

She and Simon seemed to get on well together, and a close observer might have fancied that Simon was attracted, perhaps less by her charms than by the fact that he considered her Bobby's girl and was making to cut Bobby out, in a mild way; by his own superior attractions.

After dinner Simon forgot her. He had other business on hand. He had not dressed for dinner, he was simply and elegantly attired in the blue serge suit he had worn in London. Taking his straw hat and lighting a cigar, he left

the others and, having strolled round the garden for a few minutes, left the hotel premises and strolled down the street.

The street was deserted. He reached the Bricklayer's Arms, and, having admired the view for a while from the porch of that hostelry, strolled into the bar.

The love of low company, which is sometimes a distinguishing feature of the youthful, comes from several causes: a taste for dubious sport, a kicking against restraint, simply the love of low company, or a kind of megalomania—a wish to be first person in the company present, a wish easily satisfied at the cost of a few pounds.

In Simon's case it was probably a compound of the lot.

In the bar of the Bricklayer's Arms he was first person by a mile; and this evening, owing to hay-harvest work, he was first by twenty miles, for the only occupant of the bar was Dick Horn.

Horn, as before hinted by Mudd, was a very dubious character. In old days he would have been a poacher pure and simple, to-day he was that and other things as well. Socialism had touched him. He desired, not only other men's game and fish, but their houses and furniture.

He was six feet two, very thin, with lantern

jaws, and a dark look suggestive of Romany antecedents—a most fascinating individual to the philosopher, the police, and those members of the public of artistic leanings. He was seated smoking and in company of a brown mug of beer when Simon came in.

They gave each other good evening, Simon rapped with a half-crown on the counter, ordered some beer for himself, had Horn's mug replenished, and then sat down. The landlord, having served them, left them together, and they fell into talk on the weather.

"Yes," said Horn, "it's fine enough for them that like it, weather's no account to me. I'm used to weather."

"So am I," said Simon.

"Gentlefolk don't know what weather is," said Horn; "they can take it or leave it. It's the pore that knows what weather is."

They agreed on this point.

After a while Horn got up, craned his head round the bar partition to see that no one was listening, and sat down again.

"You remember what I said to you about them night lines?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm going to set some to-night down in the river below."

"By Jove!" said Simon, vastly interested.

"If you're wanting to see a bit of sport maybe you'd like to jine me?" said Horn.

For a moment Simon held back, playing with this idea, then he succumbed.

"I'm with you," said he.

"The keeper's away at Ditchin'ham that minds this bit of the stream," said Horn. "Not that it matters, for he ain't no good, and the constable's no more than a blind horse. "He's away, so we'll have the place proper to ourselves, and you said you was anxious to see how night linin' was done. Well, you'll see it, if you come along with me. Mind you, it's not every gentleman I'd take on a job like this, but you're different. Mind you, they'd call this poachin', some of them blistered magistrits, and I'm takin' a risk lettin' you into it."

"I'll say nothing," said Simon.

"It's a risk all the same," said Horn.

"I'll pay you," said Simon.

"'Aff a quid?"

"Yes, here it is. What time do you start?"

"Not for two hours," said Horn. "My bit of a place is below hill there. Y'know the Ditchin'ham road?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's that shack down there on the right

of the road before it jines the village. I've got the lines there and all. You walk down there in two hours' time and you'll find me at the gate."

"I'll come," said Simon.

Then these two worthies parted; Horn wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, saying he had to see a man about some ferrets, Simon walking back to the hotel.

CHAPTER V

TIDD *versus* RENSHAW

THE head of a big office or business house cannot move out of his orbit without creating perturbations. Brownlow, the head clerk and second in command of the Pettigrew business, was to learn this fact to his cost.

Brownlow was a man of forty-five, whose habits and ideas seemed regulated by clockwork. He lived at Hampstead with his wife and three children, and went each day to the office. That was the summary of his life as read by an outsider. Often the bald statement covers everything. It almost did in the case of Brownlow. He had no initiative. He kept things together, he was absolutely perfect in routine, he had a profound knowledge of the law, he was correct, a good husband and a good father, but he had no initiative, and, outside of the law, very little knowledge of the world.

Imagine this correct gentleman, then, seated at his desk on the morning of the day after that on which Simon made his poaching arrange-

ments with Horn. He was turning over some papers when Balls, the second in command, came in. Balls was young and wore eyeglasses and had ambitions. He and Brownlow were old friends, and when together talked as equals.

"I've had that James man just in to see me," said Balls. "Same old game; wanted to see Pettigrew. He knows I have the whole thread of the case in my hands, but that's nothing to him, he wants to see Pettigrew."

"I know," said Brownlow. "I've had the same bother. They *will* see the head."

"When's he back?" asked Balls.

"I don't know," said Brownlow.

"Where's he gone?"

"I don't know," said Brownlow. "I only know he's gone, same as this time last year. He was a month away then."

"Oh, Lord!" said Balls, who had only joined the office nine months before and who knew nothing of last year's escapade. "A month more of this sort of bother—a month!"

"Yes," said Brownlow. "I had it to do last year, and he left no address, same as now." Then, after a moment's pause, "I'm worried about him. I can't help it, there was a strange thing happened last year. I've never told it to a soul before. He called me in one day to his

room and he showed me a bundle of bank-notes. 'See here, Brownlow,' said he, 'did you put these in my safe?' I'd never seen the things before and I have no key to his private safe. I told him I hadn't. He showed me the notes, ten thousand pounds' worth. Ten thousand pounds' worth, he couldn't account for—asked *me* if I'd put them in his safe. I said 'No,' as I told you. 'Well, it's very strange,' said he. Then he stood looking at the floor. Then he said all of a sudden, 'It doesn't matter.' Next day he went off on a month's holiday, sending word for me to carry on."

"Queer," said Balls.

"More than queer," replied Brownlow. "I've put it down to mental strain; he's a hard worker."

"It's not mental strain," said Balls. "He's as alive as you or me and as keen, and he doesn't overwork; it's something else."

"Well, I wish it would stop," said Brownlow, "for I'm nearly worried to death with clients writing to see him and trying to invent excuses, and my work is doubled."

"So's mine," said Balls. He went out and Brownlow continued his business. He had not been engaged on it for long when Morgan, the office-boy, appeared.

"Mr. Tidd, sir, to see Mr. Pettigrew."

"Show him in," said Brownlow.

A moment later Mr. Tidd appeared.

Mr. Tidd was a small, slight, old-maidish man; he walked lightly, like a bird, and carried a tall hat with a black band in one hand and a tightly-folded umbrella in the other. Incidentally he was one of Pettigrew's best clients.

"Good morning," said Mr. Tidd. "I've called to see Mr. Pettigrew with regard to those papers."

"Oh yes," said Brownlow. "Sit down, Mr. Tidd. Those papers—Mr. Pettigrew has been considering them."

"Is not Mr. Pettigrew in?"

"No, Mr. Tidd, he's not in just at present."

"When is he likely to return?"

"Well, that's doubtful; he has left me in charge."

The end of Mr. Tidd's nose moved uneasily.

"You are in charge of my case?"

"Yes, of the whole business."

"I can speak confidentially?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, I have decided to stop proceedings—in fact, I am caught in a hole."

"Oh!"

"Yes. Mrs. Renshaw has, in some illicit

manner, got a document with my signature attached—a very grave document. This is strictly between ourselves."

"Strictly."

"And she threatens to use it against me."

"Yes."

"To use it against me, unless I return to her at once the letter of hers which I put in Mr. Pettigrew's keeping."

"Oh!"

"Yes. She is a violent and very vicious woman. I have not slept all night. I live, as you perhaps know, at Hitchin. I took the first train I could conveniently catch to town this morning."

The horrible fact was beginning to dawn on Brownlow that Simon had not brought those papers back to the office. He said nothing; his lips, for a moment, had gone dry.

"How she got hold of that document with my name to it I cannot tell," said Mr. Tidd, "but she will use it against me most certainly unless I return that letter."

"Perhaps," said Brownlow, recovering himself, "perhaps she is only threatening—bluffing, as they call it."

"Oh no, she's not," said the other. "If you knew her you would not say that; no, indeed,

you would not say that. She is the last woman to threaten what she will not perform. Till that document is in her hands I will not feel safe."

"You must be careful," said Brownlow, fighting for time. "How would it be if I were to see her?"

"Useless," said Mr. Tidd.

"May I ask——"

"Yes?"

"Is the document to which your name is attached, and which is in her possession, is it—er—detrimental—I mean, plainly, is it likely to do you a grave injury?"

"The document," said Mr. Tidd, "was written by me in a moment of impulse to a lady who is—another gentleman's wife."

"It is a letter?"

"Yes, it is a letter."

"I see. Well, Mr. Tidd, *your* document, the one you are anxious to return in exchange for this document, is in the possession of Mr. Pettigrew; it is quite safe."

"Doubtless," said Mr. Tidd, "but I want it in my hands to return it myself to-day."

"I sent it with the other papers to Mr. Pettigrew's private house," said Brownlow, "and he has not yet returned it."

"Oh! But I want it to-day."

"It's very unfortunate," said Brownlow, "but he's away—and I'm afraid he must have taken the papers with him for consideration."

"Good heavens!" said Tidd. "But if that is so what am I to do?"

"You can't wait?"

"How can I wait?"

"Dear me, dear me," said Brownlow, almost driven to distraction, "this is very unfortunate."

Tidd seemed to concur.

His lips had become pale. Then he broke out: "I placed my vital interests in the hands of Mr. Pettigrew, and now at the critical moment I find this!" said he. "Away! But you must find him—you must find him, and find him at once."

If he had only known what he would find he might have been less eager perhaps.

"I'll find him if I can," said Brownlow. He rang a bell, and when Morgan appeared he sent for Balls.

"Mr. Balls," said Brownlow with a spasmodic attempt at a wink, "can you not get Mr. Pettigrew's present address?"

Balls understood.

"I'll see," said he. Out he went, returning in a minute.

"I'm sorry I can't," said Balls. "Mr. Pet-

tigrew did not leave his address when he went away."

"Thank you, Mr. Balls," said Brownlow. Then to Tidd, when they were alone: "This is as hard for me as for you, Mr. Tidd; I can't think what to do."

"We've got to find him," said Tidd.

"Certainly."

"Will he by any chance have left his address at his private house?"

"We can see," said Brownlow. "He has no telephone, but I'll go myself."

"I will go with you," said Tidd. "You understand me, this is a matter of life and death —ruin—my wife—that woman, and the other one."

"I see, I see, I see," said Brownlow, taking his hat from its peg on the wall. "Come with me; we will find him if he is to be found."

He hurried out, followed by Mr. Tidd, and in Fleet Street he managed to get a taxi. They got into it and drove to King Charles Street.

There was a long pause after the knock, and then the door opened, disclosing Mrs. Jukes. Brownlow was known to her.

"Mrs. Jukes," said Brownlow, "can you give me Mr. Pettigrew's present address?"

"No, sir, I can't."

"He was called away, was he not?"

"I don't think so, sir; he went off on some business or other. Mudd has gone with him."

"Oh, dear!" said Tidd.

"They stopped at the Charing Cross Hotel," said Mrs. Jukes, "and then I had a message they were going into the country. It was from Mr. Mudd, and he said they might be a month away."

"A month away!" said Tidd, his voice strangely calm.

"Yes, sir."

"Good gracious!" said Brownlow. Then to Tidd, "You see how I am placed?"

"A month away," said Tidd; he seemed unable to get over that obstacle of thought.

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Jukes.

They got into the taxi and went to the Charing Cross Hotel, where they were informed that Mr. Pettigrew was gone and had left no address.

Then suddenly an idea came to Brownlow—Oppenshaw. The doctor might know; failing the doctor, they were done.

"Come with me," said he; "I think I know a person who may have the address." He got into the taxi again with the other, gave the Harley Street address, and they drove off. The

horrible irregularity of the whole of this business was poisoning Brownlow's mind—hunting for the head of a firm who ought to be at his office and who held possession of a client's vitally important document.

He said nothing, neither did Mr. Tidd, who was probably engaged in reviewing the facts of his case and the position his wife would take up when that letter was put into her hands by Mrs. Renshaw.

They stopped at 110A, Harley Street.

"Why, it's a doctor's house," said Tidd.

"Yes," said Brownlow.

They knocked at the door and were let in.

The servant, in the absence of an appointment, said he would see what he could do, and showed them into the waiting-room.

"Tell Dr. Oppenshaw it is Mr. Brownlow from Mr. Pettigrew's office," said Brownlow, "on very urgent business."

They took their seats, and while Mr. Tidd tried to read a volume of *Punch* upside down, Brownlow bit his nails.

In a marvellously short time the servant returned and asked Mr. Brownlow to step in.

Oppenshaw did not beat about the bush. When he heard what Brownlow wanted he said frankly he did not know where Mr. Pettigrew

was; he only knew that he had been staying at the Charing Cross Hotel. Mudd, the man-servant, was with him.

"It's only right that you should know the position," said Oppenshaw, "as you say you are the chief clerk and all responsibility rests on you in Mr. Pettigrew's absence." Then he explained.

"But if he's like that, where's the use of finding him?" said the horrified Brownlow. "A man with mind disease!"

"More a malady than a disease," put in Oppenshaw.

"Yes, but—like that."

"Of course," said Oppenshaw, "he may at any moment turn back into himself again, like the finger of a glove turning inside out."

"Perhaps," said the other hopelessly, "but till he does turn——"

At that moment the sound of a telephone-bell came from outside.

"Till he does turn, of course, he's useless for business purposes," said Oppenshaw; "he would have no memory, for one thing—at least, no memory of business."

The servant entered.

"Please, sir, an urgent call for you."

"One moment," said Oppenshaw. Out he went.

He was back in less than two minutes.

"I have his address," said he.

"Thank goodness!" said Brownlow.

"H'm," said Oppenshaw; "but there's not good news with it. He's staying at the Rose Hotel, Upton-on-Hill, and he's been getting into trouble of some sort. It was Mudd who 'phoned, and he seemed half off his head; said he didn't like to go into details over the telephone, but wanted me to come down to arrange matters. I told him it was quite impossible to-day; then he seemed to collapse and cut me off."

"What am I to do?"

"Well, there's only two things to be done: tell this gentleman that Mr. Pettigrew's mind is affected, or take him down there on the chance that this shock may have restored Mr. Pettigrew."

"I can't tell him Mr. Pettigrew's mind is affected," said Brownlow. "I'd sooner do anything than that. I'd sooner take him down there on the chance of his being better—perhaps even if he's not, the sight of me and Mr. Tidd might recall him to himself."

"Possibly," said Oppenshaw, who was in a hurry and only too glad of any chance of cutting the business short. "Possibly. Anyhow, there

is some use in trying, and tell Mudd it's absolutely useless my going. I shall be glad to do anything I can by letter or telephone."

Brownlow took up his hat, then he recaptured Tidd and gave him the cheering news that he had Simon's address. "I'll go with you myself," said Brownlow. "Of course, the expense will fall on the office. I must send a telegram to the office and my wife to say I won't be back to-night. We can't get to Upton till this evening. We'll have to go as we are, without even waiting to pack a bag."

"That doesn't matter; that doesn't matter," said Tidd.

They were in the street now and bundling into the waiting taxi.

"Victoria Station," said Brownlow to the driver. Then to Tidd, "I can telegraph from the station."

They drove off.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT HAPPENED TO SIMON

"HE came back two hours ago, sir, and he was in his room ten minutes ago—but he's gone."

"Well," said Bobby, who was just off to bed, "he'll be back again soon; can't come to much harm here. You'd better sit up for him, Mudd."

Off he went to bed. He lay reading for awhile and thinking of Cerise; then he put out the light and dropped off to sleep.

He was awakened by Mudd. Mudd with a candle in his hand.

"He's not back yet, Mr. Robert."

Bobby sat up and rubbed his eyes. "Not back? Oh, Uncle Simon! What's the time?"

"Gone one, sir."

"Bother! What can have happened to him, Mudd?"

"That's what I'm asking myself," said Mudd.

A heavy step sounded on the gravel drive in front of the hotel, then came a ring at the

bell. Mudd, candle in hand, darted off.

Bobby heard voices down below. Five minutes passed and then reappeared Mudd—ghastly to look at.

"They've took him," said Mudd.

"What?"

"He's been took poachin'."

"Poaching!"

"Colonel Salmon's river, he and a man, and the man's got off. He's at the policeman's house, and he says he'll let us have him if we'll go bail for him, seeing he's an old gentleman and only did it for the lark of the thing."

"Thank God!"

"But he'll have to go before the magistrates on We'n'sday, whether or no—before the magistrates—*him!*"

"The devil!" said Bobby. He got up and hurried on some clothes.

"Him before the magistrates—in his present state! *Oh,* Lord!"

"Shut up!" said Bobby. His hands were shaking as he put on his things. Pictures of Simon before the magistrates were fleeting before him. Money was the only chance. Could the policeman be bribed?

Hurrying downstairs and outside into the moonlit night, he found the officer. None of

the hotel folk had turned out at the ring of the bell. Bobby, in a muted voice and beneath the stars, listened to the tale of the Law, then he tried corruption.

Useless. Constable Copper, though he might be no more good than a blind horse, according to Horn, was incorruptible yet consolatory.

"It'll only be a couple of quid fine," said he. "Maybe not that, seeing what he is and it was done for a lark. Horn will get it in the neck, but not him. He's at my house now, and you can have him back if you'll go bail he won't get loose again. He's a nice old gentleman, but a bit peculiar, I think."

Constable Copper seemed quite light-hearted over the matter, and to think little of it as an offence. A couple of quid would cover it! He did not, perhaps, appreciate fully the light and shade of the situation—a J.P. and member of the Athenæum and of the Society of Antiquaries brought up for poaching in company with an evil character named Horn!

Neither did Simon, whom they found seated on the side of the table in the Coppers' sitting-room talking to Mrs. Copper, who was wrapped in a shawl.

He went back to the hotel with them rather silent but not depressed; he tried, indeed, to

talk and laugh over the affair. This was the last straw, and Bobby burst out, giving him a "jawing" complete and of the first pattern. Then they saw him to bed and put out the light.

At breakfast he was quite himself again, and the summons which arrived at eleven o'clock was not shown to him. No one knew of the affair with the exception of the whole village, all the hotel servants, Bobby and Mudd.

The distracted Mudd spent the morning walking about, hither and thither, trying to collect his wits and make a plan. Simon had given his name, of course, though indeed it did not matter much as he was a resident at the hotel. It was impossible to deport him or move him or pretend he was ill; nothing was possible but the bench of magistrates—Colonel Salmon presiding—and Publicity.

At half-past eleven or quarter to twelve he sent the despairing message to Oppenshaw; then he collapsed into a cold sort of resignation with hot fits at times.

CHAPTER VII

TIDD *versus* BROWNLOW

AT four o'clock that day a carriage drove up to the hotel and two gentlemen alighted. They were shown into the coffee-room and Mudd was sent for. He came, expecting to find police officers, and found Brownlow and Mr. Tidd.

"One moment, Mr. Tidd," said Brownlow, then he took Mudd outside into the hall.

"He's not fit to be seen," said Mudd, when the other had explained. "No client must see him. He's right enough to look at and speak to, but he's not himself. What made you bring him here, Mr. Brownlow—now, of all times?" Brownlow started and turned. Mr. Tidd had opened the coffee-room door, and how much of their conversation he had heard Heaven knows.

"One moment," said Brownlow.

"I will wait no longer," said Mr. Tidd. "This must be explained. Is Mr. Pettigrew here or is he not? No, I will not wait."

A waiter passed at that moment with an afternoon-tea-tray.

"Is Mr. Pettigrew in this hotel?" asked Tidd.

"He's in the garden, I believe, sir."

Brownlow tried to get in front of Tidd to round him off from the garden; Mudd tried to take his arm. He pushed them aside.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE ARBOUR

WE must go back to three o'clock. At three o'clock Bobby, walking in the garden smoking a cigarette, had crossed the front of the arbour—Arbour No. 1. The grass path, soundless as a Turkey carpet, did not betray his footsteps.

There were two people in the arbour and they were "canoodling"—Simon and Julia Delyse. She was keeping her hand in, perhaps, or the attraction Simon had always had for her had betrayed her into allowing him to hold her hand. Anyhow, he was holding it. Bobby looked at her, and Julia snatched her hand away. Simon laughed; he seemed to think it a good joke, and his vain soul was doubtless pleased with having got the better of Bobby with Bobby's girl.

Bobby passed on, saying, "I beg your pardon." It was the only thing he could think of to say. Then, when out of hearing, he too laughed. He had got the better of Julia. That brooding presence would brood no more.

An hour later Simon, walking in the garden alone and in meditation, reached the bowling-green. He drew close to Arbour No. 2. The grass silencing his footsteps, he passed the arbour opening and looked in. The two people there did not see him for a moment, then they unlocked.

It was Cerise and Bobby.

Simon stood, mouth open, stock still, cigar dropped on grass.

He had laughed when Bobby had caught him with Julia. He did not laugh now.

The shock of the poaching business had left him untouched, unshaken, but Cerise, in some strange way, was his centre of gravity, his compass, and sometimes his rudder. He loved Cerise; the other girls were phantoms. Perhaps Cerise was the only real thing in his mental state.

For a moment he stood, his hand to his head like a man stunned.

Bobby ran to him and caught him.

"Where am I?" said Uncle Simon. "Oh—oh—I see." He leaned heavily on Bobby, looking about him in a dazed way like a man half awakened. Madame Rossignol, who had just come out of the hotel, seeing his condition, ran towards him, and Simon, as though recognising a guardian angel, held out his hand.

Then Bobby and the old lady gently, very gently, began to lead him back to the house.

As they drew near the back entrance three men, one following the other, came out.

Simon stopped.

He had recognised Tidd; he seemed also to recognise more fully his own position and to remember. Bobby felt his hand tightly clasping his own.

"Why, this is Mr. Tidd," said Simon.

"Mr. Pettigrew," said Tidd, "where are my papers—the papers in the case of Renshaw?"

"Tidd *v.* Renshaw," said Simon's accurate mind. "They are in the top left-hand drawer of my bureau in Charles Street, Westminster."

CHAPTER IX

CHAPTER THE LAST

"YOU are all absolutely wrong." Julia Delyse was speaking. She had been sitting mumchance at a general meeting of the Pettigrew confraternity held half an hour before Bench in a sitting-room of the Rose Hotel.

Simon had vetoed the idea of a solicitor to defend him—it would only create more talk, and from what he could make out his case was defenceless. He would throw himself on the mercy of the court. The rest had concurred.

"Throw yourself on the mercy of the court! Have you ever lived in the country? Do you know what these old magistrates are like? Don't you know that the *Wessex Chronicle* will publish yards about it, to say nothing of the local rag? I've thought out the whole thing. I've wired for Dick Pugeot."

"You wired?" said Bobby.

"Last night. You remember I asked you for his address—and there he is."

The toot of a motor-horn came from outside.

Julia rose and left the room.

Bobby followed and stopped her in the passage.

"Julia," said he, "if you can get him out of this and save his name being in the papers, you'll be a brick. You are a brick, and I've been a—a——"

"I know," said Julia, "but you could not help yourself—nor can I. I'm not Cerise. Love is lunacy and the world's all wrong. Now go back and tell your uncle to say nothing in court and to pretend he's a fool. If Pugeot is the man you say he is, he'll save his name. Old Mr. Pettigrew has got to be camouflaged."

"Good heavens, Julia," cried Bobby, the vision of guns emulating zebras rising before him, "you can't mean to paint him?"

"Never mind what I mean," said Julia.

The Upton Bench was an old Bench. It had been in existence since the time of Mr. Justice Shallow. It held its sittings in the court-room of the Upton Police Court, and there it dispensed justice, of a sort, of a Wednesday morning upon "drunks," petty pilferers, poachers, tramps, and any other unfortunates appearing before it.

Colonel Grouse was the chairman. With him this morning sat Major Partridge-Cooper, Colonel Salmon, Mr. Teal, and General Grampound. The reporters of the local rag and the *Wessex Chronicle* were in their places. The Clerk of the Court, old Mr. Quail, half-blind and fumbling with his papers, was at his table; a few village constables, including Constable Copper, were by the door, and there was no general public.

The general public was free to enter, but none of the villagers ever came. It was an understood thing that the Bench discouraged idlers and inquisitive people.

The inalienable right of the public to enter a Court of Justice and see Themis at work had never been pushed. The Bench was much more than the Bench—it was the Gentry and the Power of Upton,* against which no man could run counter. Horn alone, in pot-houses and public places, had fought against this shibboleth; he had found a few agreers, but no backers.

At eleven to the moment the Pettigrew contingent filed in and took their places, and after them a big yellow man, the Hon. Dick Pugeot. He was known to the magistrates, but Justice is

* This was before the Politicians had amended the Bench.

blind and no mark of recognition was shown, whilst a constable, detaching himself from the others, went to the door and shouted:

"Richard Horn."

Horn, who had been caught and bailed, and who had evidently washed himself and put on his best clothes, entered, made for the dock, as a matter of long practice, and got into it.

"Simon Pettigrew," called the Clerk.

Simon rose and followed Horn. Instructed by Julia to say nothing, he said nothing.

Then Pugeot rose.

"I beg your pardon," said Pugeot; "you have got my friend's name wrong. Pattigraw, please; he's a Frenchman, though long resident in England; and it's not Simon—but Sigismond."

"Rectify the charge-sheet," said Colonel Grouse. "First witness."

Simon, dazed, and horrified as a solicitor by this line of action, tried to speak, but failed. The brilliant idea of Julia's, taken up with enthusiasm by Pugeot, was evidently designed to fool the newspaper men and save the name of Simon the Solicitor. Still, it was horrible, and he felt as though Pugeot were trying to carry him pick-a-back across an utterly impossible bridge.

He guessed now why this had been sprung on him. They knew that as a lawyer he would never have agreed to such a statement.

Then Copper, hoisting himself into the witness-stand, hitching his belt and kissing the Testament, began:

"I swear before A'mighty Gawd that the evidence I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me Gawd, Amen on the evening of the 16th pursuin' my beat by Porter's Meadows I see defendant in the company of Horn——"

"What were they doing?" asked old Mr. Teal, who was busily taking notes just like any real judge.

"Walkin' towards the river, sir."

"In which direction?"

"Up stream, sir."

"Go on."

Copper went on.

"Crossin' the meadows, they kept to the river, me after them——"

"How far behind?" asked Major Partridge-Cooper.

"Half a field's length, sir, till they reached the bend of the stream beyond which the prisoner Horn began to set his night lines, assisted by the prisoner Puttigraw. 'Hullo,' says I, and

Horn bolted, and I closed with the other one."

"Did he make resistance?"

"No, sir. I walked him up to my house quite quiet."

"That all?"

"Yes, sir."

"You can stand down."

The prisoners had pleaded guilty and there was no other evidence. Simon began to see light. He could perceive at once that it would be a question of a fine, that the magistrates and Press had swallowed him as specified by Pugeot, that his name was saved. But he reckoned without Pugeot.

Pugeot had done everything in life except act as an advocate, and he was determined not to let the chance escape. Several brandies-and-sodas at the hotel had not lessened his enthusiasm for Publicity, and he rose.

"Mr Chairman and Justices," said Pugeot. "I would like to say a few words on behalf of my friend, the prisoner, whom I have known for many years and who now finds himself in this unfortunate position through no fault of his own."

"How do you make that out?" asked Colonel Grouse.

"I beg your pardon?" said Pugeot, checked in his eloquence. "Oh yes, I see what you mean. Well, as a matter of fact, as a matter of fact—well, not to put too fine a point upon it, leaving aside the fact that he is the last man to do a thing of this sort, he has had money troubles in France."

"Do you wish to make out a case of *non compos mentis?*" asked old Mr. Teal. "There is no medical evidence adduced."

"Not in the least," said Pugeot; "he's as right as I am, only he has had worries." Then, confidentially, and speaking to the Bench as fellow-men: "If you will make it a question of a fine, I will guarantee everything will be all right—and besides"—a brilliant thought—"his wife will look after him."

"Is his wife present?" asked Colonel Grouse.

"That is the lady, I believe," said Colonel Salmon, looking in the direction of the Rossignols, whom he dimly remembered having seen at the Squire Simpson's with Simon.

Pugeot, cornered, turned round and looked at the blushing Madame Rossignol.

"Yes," said he, without turning a hair, "that is the lady."

Then the recollection struck him with a thud

that he had introduced the Rossignols as Rossignols to the Squire Simpson's and that they were registered at the hotel as Rossignols. He felt as though he were in a skidding car, but nothing happened, no accusing voice rose to give him the lie, and the Bench retired to consider its sentence, which was one guinea fine for Sigismond and a month for Horn.

"You've married them," said Julia, as they walked back to the hotel, leaving the others to follow. "I *never* meant you to say that. But perhaps it's for the best; she's a good woman and will look after him, and he'll *have* to finish the business, won't he?"

"Rather, and a jolly good job!" said Pugeot. "Now I've got to bribe the hotel man and stuff old Simpson with the hard facts. Never had such fun in my life. I say, old thing, where do you hang out in London?"

Julia gave him her address.

That was the beginning of the end of Pugeot as a bachelor—also of Simon, who never would have been brought up to the scratch but for Pugeot's speech—also of Mr. Ravenshaw, who never in his wildest dreams could have foreseen his marriage to Simon's step-daughter a week after Simon's marriage to her mother.

Mudd alone remains unmarried out of all these people, for the simple and efficient reason that there is no one to marry him to. He lives with the Pettigrews in Charles Street, and his only trouble in life is dread of another outbreak on the part of Simon. This has not occurred yet—will never occur, if there is any truth in the dictum of Oppenshaw that marriage is the only cure for the delusions of youth.

THE END

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